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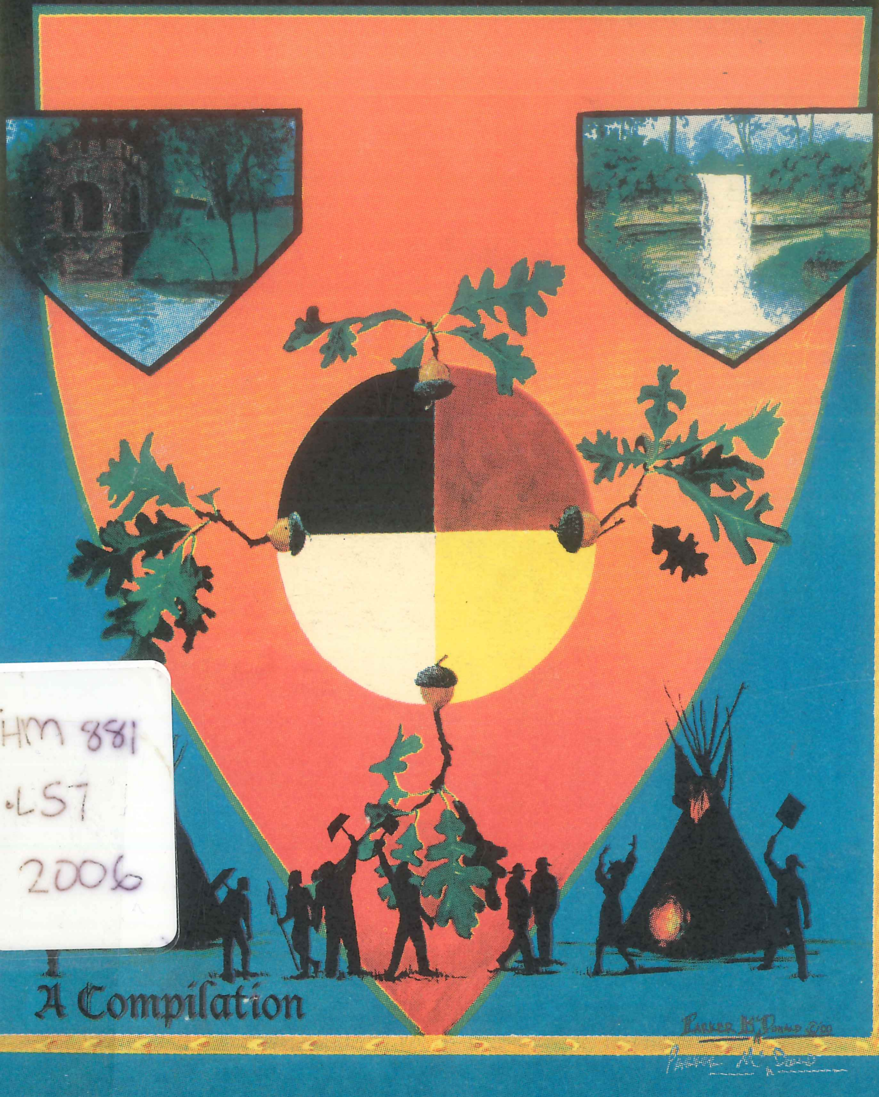
LISTEN

The Story of the People at Taku Wakan Tipi and the Reroute of Highway 55

~OR~

The Minnehaha Free State


Parker McDonald 2/00

HM 881
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2006

A Compilation

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~~~ * ~~~ * ~~~

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Photos throughout book by
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Artist information and photographs by Michael Bayly can be found at www.cpinternet.com/mbayly/facesofresistance.htm

Paintings by Cher Fields

Pseudonyms are used occasionally throughout the book, when requested by a storyteller

~~~ * ~~~ * ~~~

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LISTEN:

The Story of the People at Taku Wakan Tipi and the Reroute of Highway 55

OR

The Minnehaha Free State

Stories compiled and edited by
Elli King

Feral Press
Tuscon, AZ

ɵ3ɵ

This book is dedicated to generations to come, that they may hear these stories and learn from them.

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Thanks

Throughout the making of this book, I have been blessed with many gifts. Among them are having an excuse to spend time with great people, some I hadn't ever really talked to, becoming a Free State Historian by poring over and over the stories, learning interviewing skills, and getting chance after chance to practice good listening. Listening to everyone else has immensely helped me in my own long process of never-quite-closure, but understanding that time in my life and all the effects that place and those people had on me, and in the end, I got a copy of this book with all these incredible stories!

I expected nothing when taking on this task, and ended up receiving so much. I wanted to take this space to express true thanks for these gifts I was given along the way…

Many people lightened the workload and took on tasks better left to them than me. Thanks of course to printer Dwight Metzger for his excitement, patience, trust and reassurance. Gracious thanks to Bob Greenberg for toiling over photographs, margins, text boxes and proofreading, and for many excellent suggestions in those endless final hours. Also thanks to computer lackey Matt Tyler, Seth and Tabitha for graphics support, photo consultant Lutsen Mike, proofreader Ryan Blaisdell, whoever was around for consultation, and all childcare providers!

Also thanks to lovely Rory for making this book a priority in our lives, and to Fáelán for being too little to understand the effort he's trying to thwart.

Editor's Introduction

This book is a compilation of stories, told by the people who worked and lived to preserve the land known to the Dakota people as Taku Wakan Tipi, or "Where the spirits dwell," from being paved over by a roadway. Located in southeast Minneapolis by the meeting place of the Mississippi and Minnesota rivers, this land drew people from all walks of life. From across town, across the country, and eventually from all across the world, people came together for the longest urban land occupation in the history of America, a period of 16 months. Many incredible things happened in this time and place; I have not met a person who was involved, who doesn't say that it changed their life.

In some way it came about that this story should be told, but who could be the one to tell it? Not me … not even a team of writers could accurately capture the whole story, all the passion, love, hatred and tragedy of this time. So it was decided that the only way to tell this story would be in the words of the people who lived it, with as many people contributing as possible.

I took on the task, gathering stories for four years, some written, most spoken and transcribed. I tried to limit my editing to what was necessary to make a story that is readable and relevant, and left the rest up to personal style.

Things left unsaid

When I began collecting these stories, my intention was to make a thorough and complete historical account of this event. As I got close to feeling like I had enough material, I began to try and fill in the gaps in the story, and fret about missing pieces.

One day, as I was reviewing what I had, I realized that this was not only an impossible goal, but also a silly one. The stories that people told me are as complete and perfect as the people who told them, and as true as any culture. That is as real as it gets, and beautiful at that!

So there are many amazing stories not included in this book- maybe someday you will hear them as well. My hope is that this book will serve as a small round window into the past, shaped and formed by people ... nothing more, and nothing less.

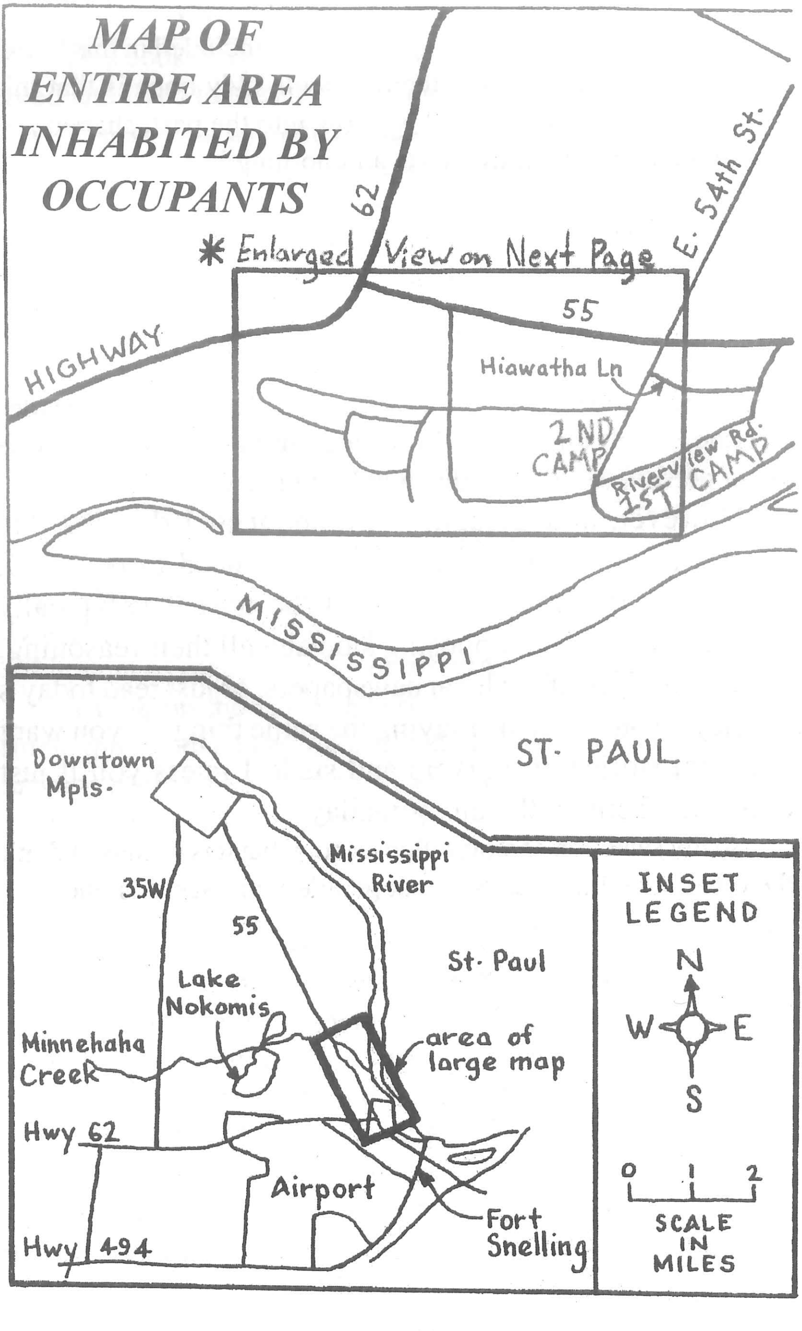
An objective viewpoint?

I originally intended to have this book encompass many viewpoints. I wanted to interview police, and MNDoT workers, and people who didn't want the road, and legislators on both sides of the issue. I still think it might be good to talk to some of these people in person, to see how they really do feel.

However, as I thought more about it, I decided that the people in this book are the ones who need to be heard, remembered, and given space to speak, because they typically are not. If you want the opposing side and all their reasoning, look in the archives of the local newspapers, or just read today's paper; they're probably still saying the same thing. If you want the personal stories of workers and such, I guess you'll just have to meet them on the bus someday.

So my selection of storytellers is not what it is because I don't see the other side, but because most people don't see this one.

MAP OF ENTIRE AREA INHABITED BY OCCUPANTS



62
E. 54th St.
* Enlarged View on Next Page
HIGHWAY
55
Hiawatha Ln
2ND CAMP
Riverview Rd.
1ST CAMP
MISSISSIPPI
ST. PAUL
Downtown Mpls.
35W
55
Mississippi River
St. Paul
Lake Nokomis
Minnehaha Creek
area of large map
Hwy 62
Airport
Fort Snelling
Hwy 494
INSET LEGEND
N
W
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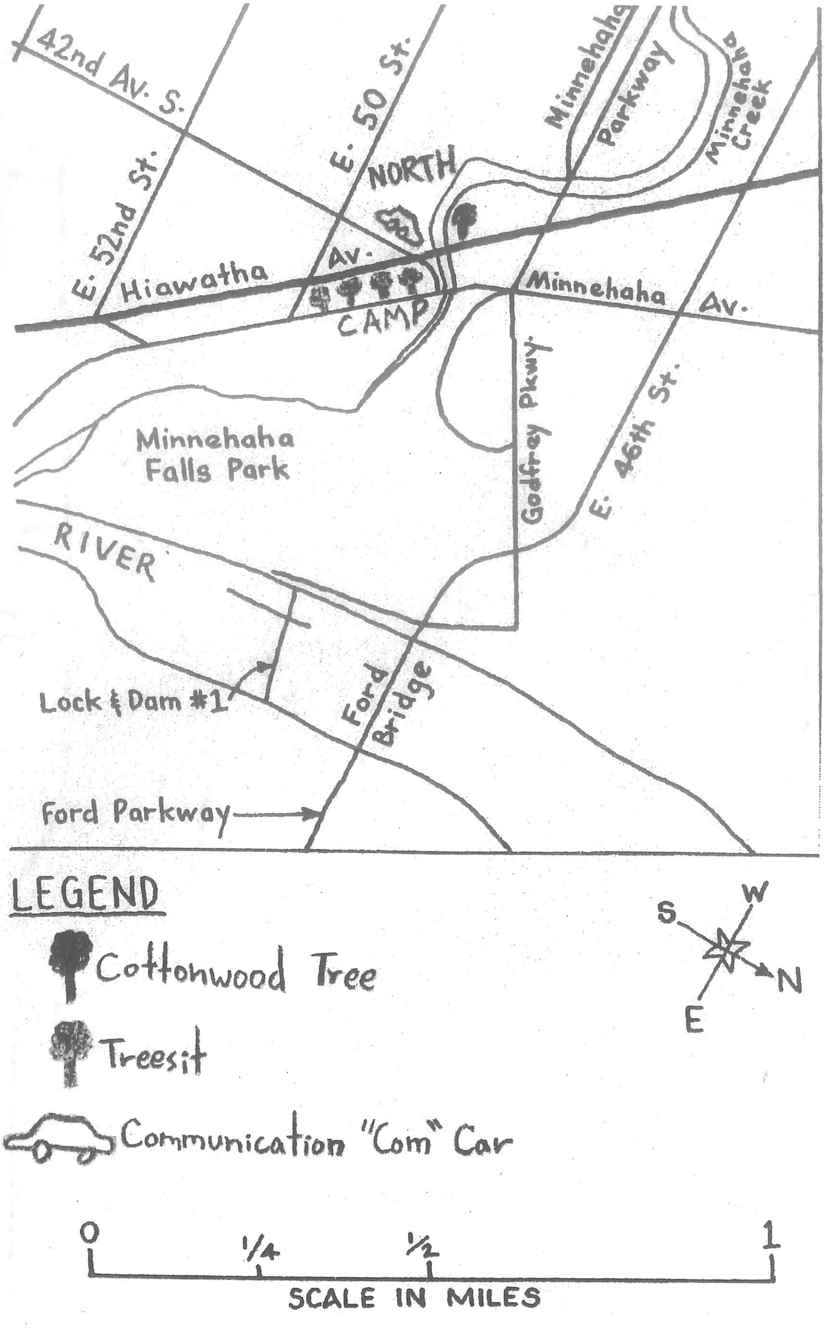
S
0
1
2
SCALE IN MILES


42nd Av. S.
E. 52nd St.
E. 50 St.
NORTH
Minnehaha
Parkway
Minnehaha Creek
Hiawatha
Av.
CAMP
Minnehaha
Av.
Godfrey Pkwy.
E. 46th St.
Minnehaha Falls Park
RIVER
Lock & Dam #1
Ford Bridge
Ford Parkway
LEGEND
Cottonwood Tree
Treesit
Communication "Com" Car
S
W
N
E
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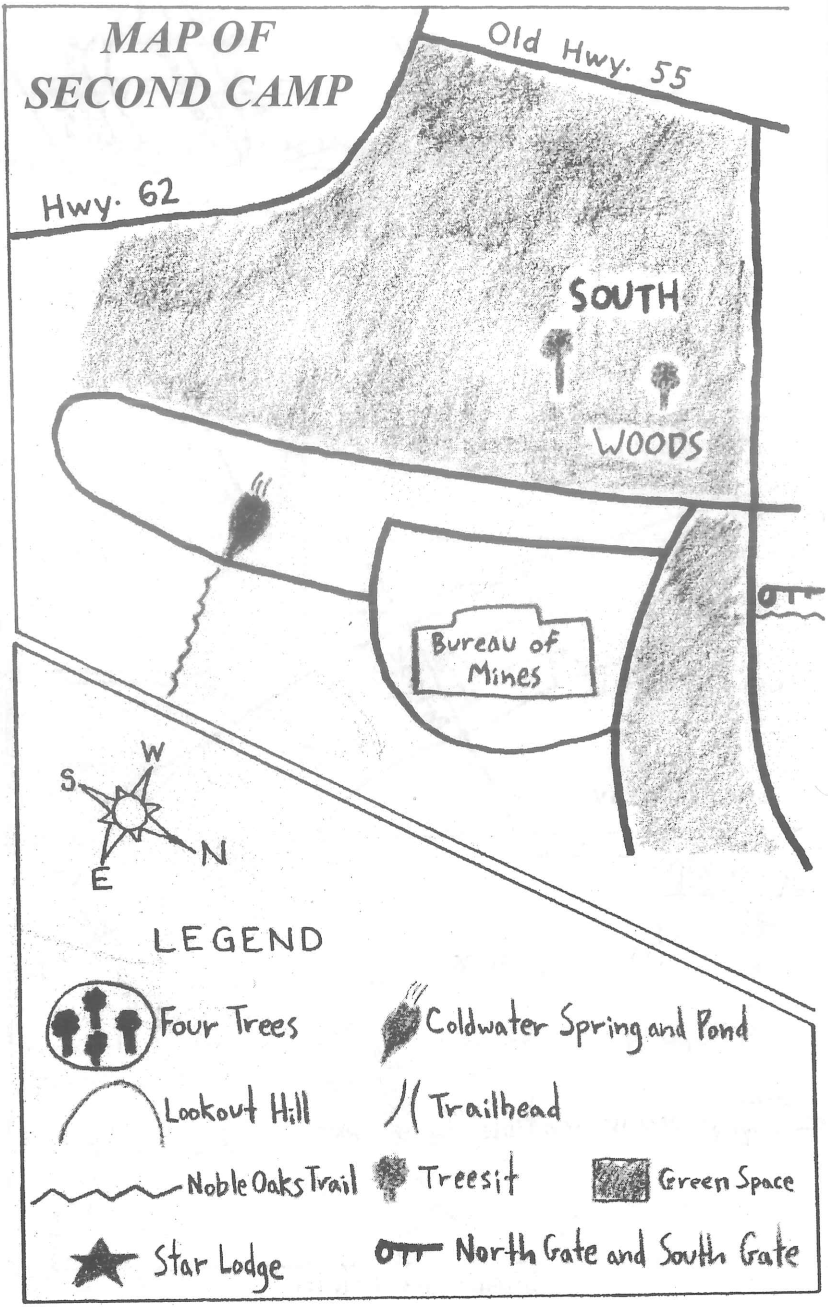
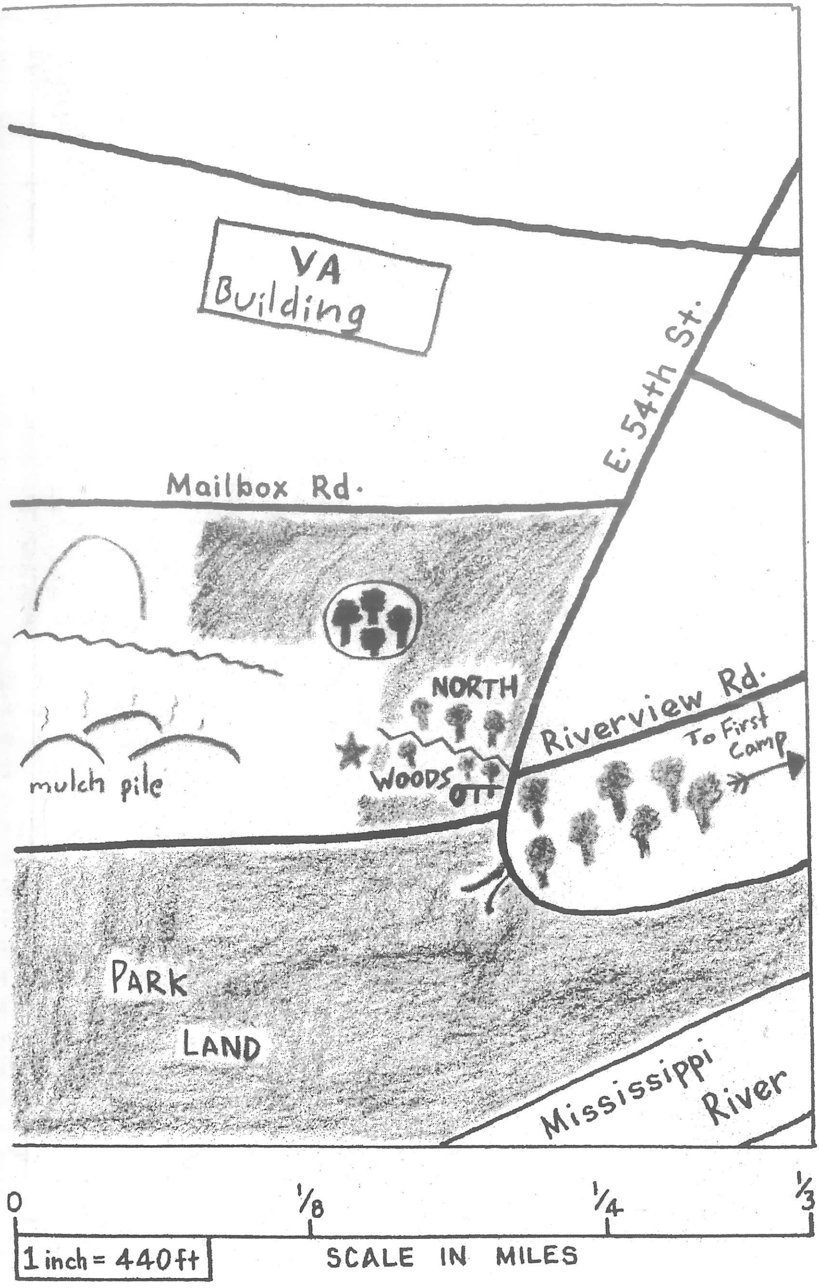
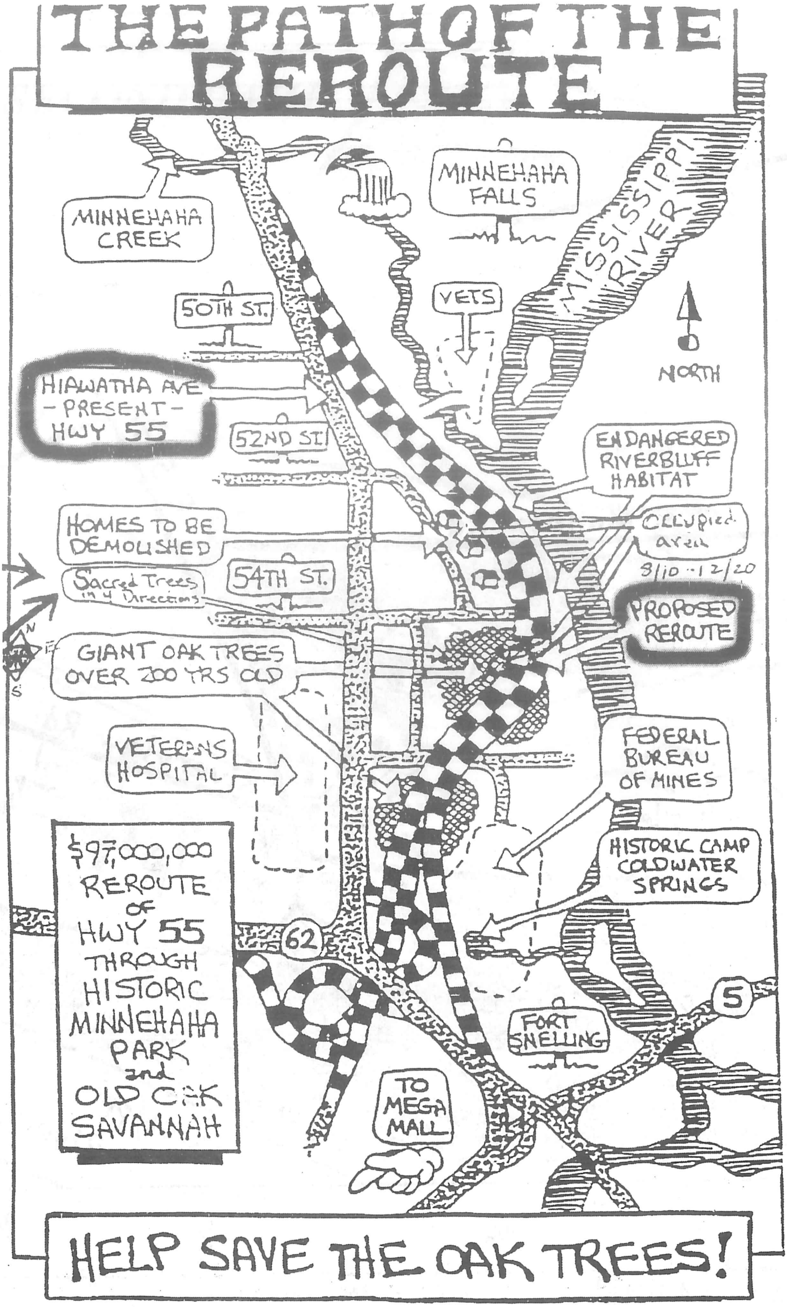
1/4
1/2
1
SCALE IN MILES

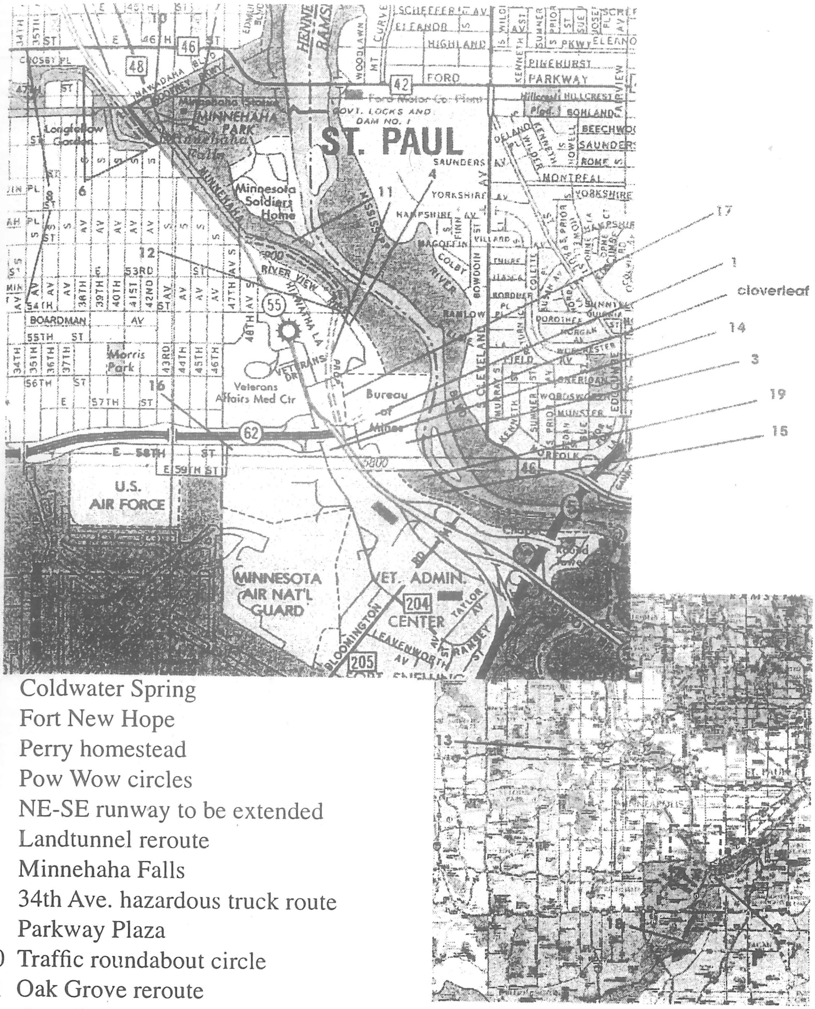


MAP OF SECOND CAMP

Old Hwy. 55
Hwy. 62
SOUTH
WOODS
Bureau of Mines
W
S
N
E
LEGEND
Four Trees
Coldwater Spring and Pond
Lookout Hill
Trailhead
Noble Oaks Trail
Treesit
Green Space
Star Lodge
North Gate and South Gate


VA Building
E. 54th St.
Mailbox Rd.
NORTH
WOODS
Riverview Rd.
To First Camp
mulch pile
PARK
LAND
Mississippi
River
0
1/8
1/4
1/3
1 inch = 440 ft
SCALE IN MILES


THE PATH OF THE REROUTE
MINNEHAHA CREEK
MINNEHAHA FALLS
MISSISSIPPI RIVER
50TH ST.
VETS
NORTH
HIAWATHA AVE - PRESENT - HWY 55
52ND ST.
ENDANGERED RIVERBLUFF HABITAT
HOMES TO BE DEMOLISHED
Occupied area 8/10 - 12/20
Sacred Trees in 4 Directions
54TH ST.
PROPOSED REROUTE
N
E
S
GIANT OAK TREES OVER 200 YRS OLD
VETERANS HOSPITAL
FEDERAL BUREAU OF MINES
HISTORIC CAMP COLDWATER SPRINGS
$97,000,000 REROUTE OF HWY 55 THROUGH HISTORIC MINNEHAHA PARK and OLD OAK SAVANNAH
62
5
FORT SNELLING
TO MEGA MALL
HELP SAVE THE OAK TREES!


ST. PAUL
Minnehaha Park
Minnehaha Falls
Longfellow Gardens
Minnesota Soldiers Home
GOVT. LOCKS AND DAM NO. 1
Ford Motor Co. Plant
Morris Park
Veterans Affairs Med Ctr
Bureau of Mines
U.S. AIR FORCE
MINNESOTA AIR NAT'L GUARD
VET. ADMIN. CENTER
cloverleaf
17
1
14
3
19
15
4
11
12
16
6
10
13
18
2
42
46
48
55
62
204
205

1 Coldwater Spring
2 Fort New Hope
3 Perry homestead
4 Pow Wow circles
5 NE-SE runway to be extended
6 Landtunnel reroute
7 Minnehaha Falls
8 34th Ave. hazardous truck route
9 Parkway Plaza
10 Traffic roundabout circle
11 Oak Grove reroute
12 Grand Entrance to Minnehaha Park
13 Big Medicine Spring at Wirth Park
14 Storm water pond
15 Ancient village creekbed
16 Takuwakantipi (Dwelling place of the Gods
17 Utility/fiber-optic right of way
18 MN Valley National Wildlife Refuge and Recreation Area (10,000 acres)
19 Ancient village site

A GALLERY OF INTRODUCTION

Longfellow Messenger March 1996

Thirty years of highway controversy...

Preliminary design unveiled for final leg of Highway 55

State and local highway officials unveiled the preliminary design for the final leg of Highway 55 at a community meeting at Roosevelt High School on February 8. The meeting was convened by Twelfth Ward Council Member Dennis Schulstad to give area residents a preview of the plan to rebuild Highway 55 between 46th St. and the 62nd St. Crosstown.

When the new roadway is finished sometime after the year 2000, it will mark the completion of a highway project that has been embroiled in controversy for more than 30 years.

Starting in the 1960s, the State Highway Department began advocating for a four lane freeway along Hiawatha Avenue that would have cut a wide swath through Minnehaha park. When the Minneapolis Park Board sued to block the project, the Highway Department agreed to scale back its plan and build an at-grade parkway rather than a major freeway modelled after I-35.

An impasse between Park Board and Highway Department was resolved when both sides agreed to plan for a covered roadway or land bridge over Highway 55 between Minnehaha Park and the Minnehaha Creek, a block to the south. The land bridge will connect the recently renovated Longfellow House with the lagoon that is now on the west side of Hiawatha Avenue.

The bridge will be included in the first phase of the construction project, scheduled to begin in 1999. It will rise up 15 feet above the existing intersection at Hiawatha Avenue and Minnehaha Parkway, and roadway will be depressed 15 feet below grade.

Motorists driving south on Hiawatha will start descending into a short tunnel just south of 46th Street. A new access road to the shopping center on Hiawatha Avenue will be built behind the Conoco station on 46th.

South of the creek, the rebuilt roadway will intersect with 50th Street, where traffic signals will provide pedestrian and bicycle access to Minnehaha Park.

South of 52nd Street, Highway 55 will swing toward the river and run along the Riverview Road, behind the small residential neighborhood on the east side of Minnehaha Avenue, across from the Veterans' Hospital.

The new roadway will intersect with 54th Street, which will become a major entrance to the park. Access to the Veterans' Hospital will be maintained from Minnehaha Avenue which will intersect with Highway 55 at 52nd Street.

Construction of the final link to the 62nd Crosstown, along property now owned by the Bureau of Mines, is scheduled to begin in 2000, with completion scheduled in 2001.

The plan to swing Highway 55 toward the river has generated some opposition from area residents who are concerned that the highway project will disrupt a natural wooded area, which was formerly railroad right-of-way, at the south end of the park. Several people at the February 8th meeting urged highway planners to find an alternate route for Highway 55 along the segment of Minnehaha that runs in front of the Veterans' Hospital.

Schulstad reported that planners had considered maintaining Highway 55 on its existing right-of-way on Minnehaha Avenue, but that option would have required the Highway Department to move the historic brick houses on the east side of Minnehaha. Moreover, the Minnehaha Avenue option would have resulted in a four-year construction delay and could have jeopardized $14 million in funding for the project, Schulstad said.

"No one is entirely pleased with all aspects of the project," Schulstad said, "but if you ask 10,000 people in South Minneapolis, 9,500 of them will tell you that they want to see Highway 55 completed."

Let's get Hiawatha Ave. built

"This has been discussed since I was in high school and I'm 50 years old now," Schulstad said. "Businesses that say this will be harmful are right, but they chose to go in there knowing that Hiawatha was going to be rebuilt."

Dear Editor,

The actions of the Park and River Alliance make my jaw tight with anger because they neither know the torturous history of the Hiawatha Corridor project, appreciate the hard work of everyday citizens that went into the design, nor care much for the facts.

Badly in need of the new Hiawatha Avenue

"We know that no matter what's done, not everyone will be happy with the project, but it's far too late to be making changes now."

Hwy. 55 expansion

According to Schulstad, the advisory committee favored rerouting Hiawatha through the woods because widening the existing roadway would have resulted in a division of Veterans Administration land; the demolition of businesses, apartment buildings and several historic structures near the VA hospital; and the isolation of the few remaining homes east of Hiawatha.

The $25 million project would include three bridges over Minnehaha...

Total cost of the project is approximately $42 million.

The project that was once expected to cost $20 million is now estimated at $60 million.

Coalition members say MNDoT knows full well that it can rebuild Highway 55 in its existing corridor for much less than the half billion dollars the state is spending on the reroute.

New Hwy. 55 will destroy park

Dear Editor,

It's not

This cannot be. Our interest in and need for green space in the city has changed considerably in the 30 years since the rerouting plan was conceived. We will not accept the excuse that it is too far along to change the process now.

Rather than proceed with a plan just because there is one, we must look for alternatives. Once it's paved, it's gone forever.

too late

provokes activists

If the town meeting held in February on this portion of the project was held to "get initial feedback on the project from area residents," why did those running the meeting do a lot more telling than asking?

to save

Local residents would have voiced their concerns earlier, but many were not aware of the extent of the realignment, said Lynn Ford...

...in what little press the project has gotten, it is continually referred to as a reconstruction or widening... If headlines were to convey what is really being proposed- "MNDoT Plans to Build a New Highway Along the Scenic Fort Snelling Bike Trail"- public opposition would be heard.

Minnehaha Park

For his part, Nelson is determined to fight the proposed alignment. "Personally, I feel that if I don't do all I can to stop this road, I'll burn in hell for all eternity," he said.

Alliance gathers support

1,000 people, including area residents, have already signed a petition expressing their discontent with the proposed road.

The fledgling Park and River Alliance has gathered more than 2,500 signatures...

to block Hiawatha project

"I can't find many people wanting this road," said Keith Werner, a board member of the alliance. This summer, the group collected 7,000 signatures opposing the Hiawatha route at a table at a bike trail head at the park's south end.

Group files suit to stop shift of Hiawatha Ave. through park

The builders of a wider Hiawatha Avenue found themselves on familiar terrain- in court and under popular attack-when a residents group filed suit Thursday in federal court to stop the road's reconstruction within Minnehaha Park.

A Spiritual

The lawsuit by the Park and River alliance names federal and state transportation departments, the city of Minneapolis and the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board. It alleges that the proposed route violates federal law barring the use of park and recreation land or historic sites unless "feasible and prudent" alternatives are unavailable.

MnDOT hits bump: camp Earth First!

Camp Two Pines represents a bump in the road for the department. The scraggly inhabitants of the camp belong to Earth First!, and they hope to block the department from acheiving its 30-year-old dream of leveling houses on Riverview Road and cutting down oaks in park land...

Some called it "the first wave of resistance." Some found it bizarre or scary. But the fight over the Hiawatha reroute near Minnehaha Park has entered a strange new dimension: activists risking their lives...

Movement

Anderson said it would violate federal law for either Transportation department folks or Minneapolis police to move the staffs, because they represent things sacred to Indians and therefore have federal protection.

...profound showdown: the Creator vs. the Transportation Department, which always gets its way.

It was the kind of coalition that had rarely been seen in America: the joining of indigenous and non-native people whose shared vision and complementary talents could combine to create a better future for all. No longer was the central battle being waged white against non-white. Rather, it was corporate America that had to be stopped.

Minnehaha Declaration

-We came here on August 10th, 1998 to protect Minneapolis Green Spaces and to Stop the Reroute of Highway 55 through Minnehaha Park.

-We established the Free State on the principles of nonviolence and group consensus.

-We demand that Highway 55 not be rerouted through the park and that any "safety improvements" do not increase the road capacity. More road capacity only increases traffic without decreasing congestion. We must end our addiction to cars.

-We demand that all land use decisions be made by those communities that are directly affected by those decisions. Governments have no right to take land without our permission!

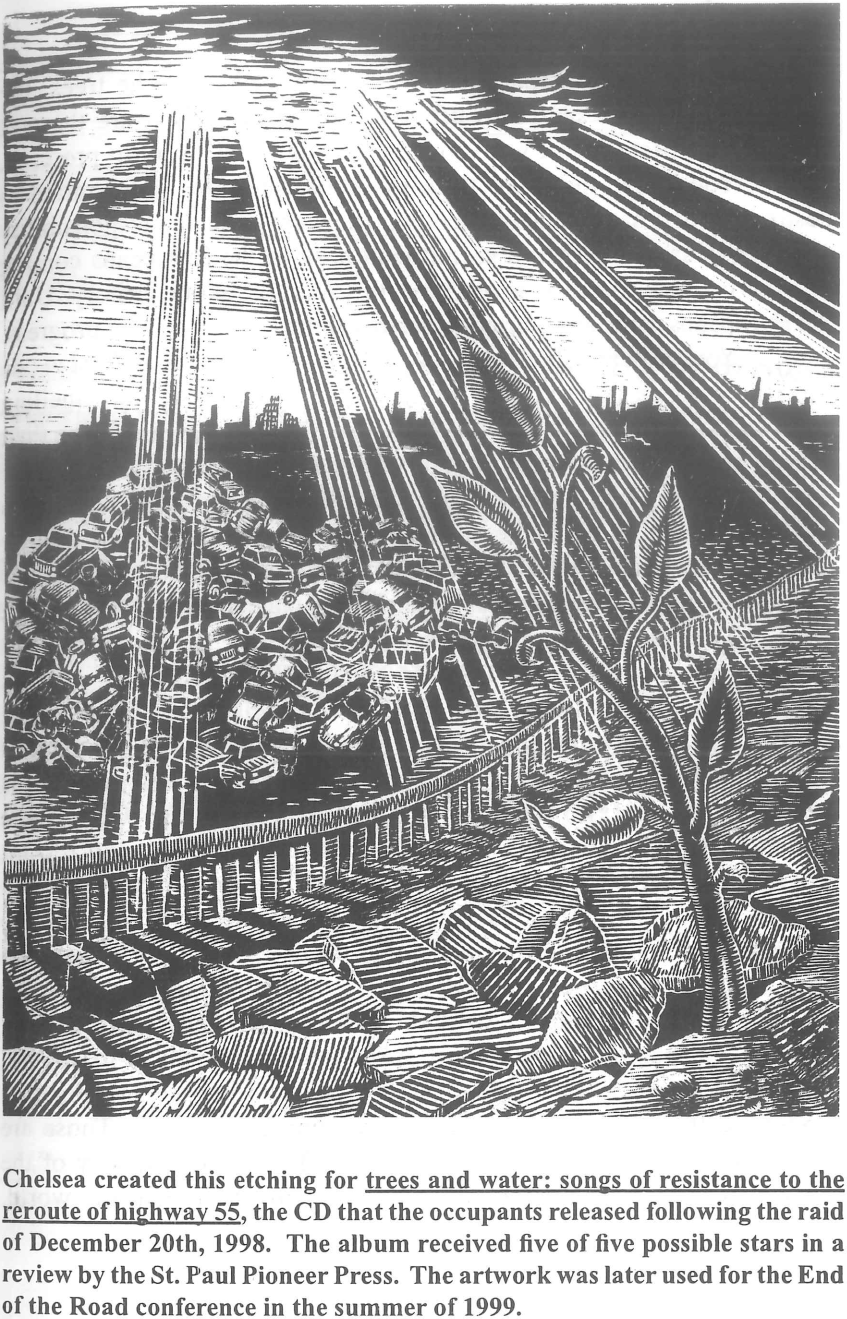
-We demand the preservation of all current green space.

-We demand the recognition as a sovereign community the Mendota Mdewakanton Dakota.

-We support the demand of the Mendota Mdewakanton Dakota community for the repatriation of their lands as laid out in the Act of Congress of 1863.

-We will not voluntarily leave this site until the rerouting of Highway 55 is canceled, the Mendota Mdewakanton Dakota community is recognized as sovereign, and all land claims are upheld.

NO COMPROMISE IN DEFENSE OF MOTHER EARTH!



Chelsea created this etching for trees and water: songs of resistance to the reroute of highway 55, the CD that the occupants released following the raid of December 20th, 1998. The album received five of five possible stars in a review by the St. Paul Pioneer Press. The artwork was later used for the End of the Road conference in the summer of 1999.

Chris Leith

The highway department was going to destroy the trees, the oak trees that were sacred to us. Also, the Springs that are there at the site. The State didn't want to recognize or didn't want to preserve.

You know, that goes back to 1890s when the State started to destroy the first nation Dakota people, who were given the responsibility to preserve sacred sites and sacred land prior to the Europeans coming into this country. Because at one time, this was all Dakota territory. Until the Europeans came and started to destroy things in the name of progress.

You've heard about it, we've tried to make you aware that at one time there was a large village there at what you call the Fort Snelling area. In fact that's why it's a State Park now. 'Cause many times the First Nation people have a sacred area or village site; the State, they say they want to preserve it by making a park or establishing something there such as Fort Snelling, in the name of history. The reality is that they destroy the sacredness of the land. That's been going on for years in the name of progress and it's escalated to what is now called Corporate America.

They think they own everything but they don't. They don't own anything because the Creator created this country, he created it for the red man to take care of as if it's their own. But now, we aren't able to do that because of greed, and Corporate America.

We were told at the ceremony that eventually, there is going to be a civil war in this country because Corporate America, the government, state, federal, county, they don't want to listen. America is fairly young, pretty new on this continent.

So somewhere along the line there is going to have to be some reconsideration. The prophecy states that land that is not taken care of by the landlords of this country ... First Nation people ... well the Creator will accomplish that.

The prophecy states that we are to help those that want to survive. And that's where people come together as the human race and worship. Those are the people that the creator is going to listen to. Those are going to be the survivors of this country. That's the prophecy of the First Nation people and the indigenous nations throughout the world.

I see a time long after the skies have grown dark and dirty and the water has become bad smelling. I see a time of seven generations when all the colors of mankind will gather under the sacred tree of life and the whole earth will become a circle again. And in that knowledge and understanding and unity among all living things, the young white ones will come to those of my people and ask for this wisdom.

-From the prophecy of Crazy Horse (1841-1877)
of the Oglala Band of the Lakota People

PART ONE

CHAPTER ONE:
A LONG STRUGGLE

"... at one point this was going to be a below-grade freeway. There was such an outrage by people against it that [MNDoT] abandoned the plan. What we found out about MNDoT is, they abandon something for a while and then they come back to it ..."

-Lynn Ford

Plans for the construction of a new Highway 55 date back to the middle of the 20th century. Shown here are just two examples of countless newspaper articles that detail this long, complex planning process.

The Minneapolis Star August 1st, 1969

20 ACRES INVOLVED

Minnehaha Park loses to highway

By Gwyneth Jones, Minneapolis Star Staff Writer

The Minnesota Supreme Court today gave the go-ahead to a proposal to improve Highway 55 through Minnehaha Park.

Doubt remained, however, about how soon the proposed expressway might be built. Park officials were discussing the possibility of an appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court. Minnesota Highway Department officials said work could start in early 1972 if there are no problems, such as a refusal by Minneapolis City Council to approve revised plans.

The highway department has proposed to take 20 acres of the park to turn Highway 55 into an expressway. The highway now runs through the park on Hiawatha Avenue. S.

The court threw out the appeal of the Minneapolis Park Board, which wanted the proposed expressway to go west of the park, allowing unification of two parts of the park now divided by Hiawatha and Minnehaha Ave. S. and railroad tracks.

The high court ruled that the Highway Department, acting for the State, has condemnation authority superior to that of any subdivisions of government or utility corporations.

It rejected the argument of the Park Board that courts should "balance" the value of competing uses of land when one condemning agency wants to take land already used by another.

In an opinion written by Justice William Murphy, the court said the Minnesota Legislature has given the Highway Commissioner discretion to decide where a highway should be routed.

"If there is evidence or reasonable inferences from the evidence which give support to the commisioner's decision, then the court may not interfere," said Justice Murphy.

Minneapolis Tribune February 15th, 1974

Hiawatha Freeway may not be built

By Nick Coleman, Staff Writer

The Hiawatha Avenue freeway planned for South Minneapolis- plagued by escalating costs and uncertain funding, and already almost ten years behind schedule- may never be built, two alderman said Thursday.

First proposed in 1964 to speed traffic from the airport and the southern suburbs to the city's center, the six-mile long improvement of Highway 55 now carries an estimated cost of $60 million, up from $43 million four years ago.

William Crawford, the Highway Department's district engineer, said that he is not suggesting that the project be abandoned, but that funding problems and the drafting of an environmental impact statement are clouding its future.

Mayor Albert Hofstede said the funding problem leaves the city with only two basic options; to wait and see what happens or decide not to build at all.

Russell Green, Twelfth Ward, said, "They're still buying houses and tearing them down- it's ridiculous. If they tell me they're not going to build it, we'll march on the State Capitol and get them to resurface the street and sell back the land."

Efforts to preserve the area of the proposed reroute date back to the same period. One of the earliest of these efforts was focused on Camp Coldwater, which refers to the first encampment of European settlers in Minnesota. It was located in the area now owned by the Bureau of Mines, all around Coldwater Spring. **(See p. 311 for more information on Coldwater Spring)**

Dave Fudally

Dave Fudally grew up on 56th Street and 43rd Avenue, right over by Camp Coldwater. The first time he went there he was five years old, and he and his brother used to play all through there. He remembers that archaeological digs were being done even at that time, (~1960), and he and his brother thought the holes being dug were grave sites!

The effort to preserve Camp Coldwater started in 1956, when it was supposed to be included in Fort Snelling, but was left out for lack of funds. Then in 1960 it was put on the National Historic Registry. This gave the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MNDoT) trouble all the way to the end.

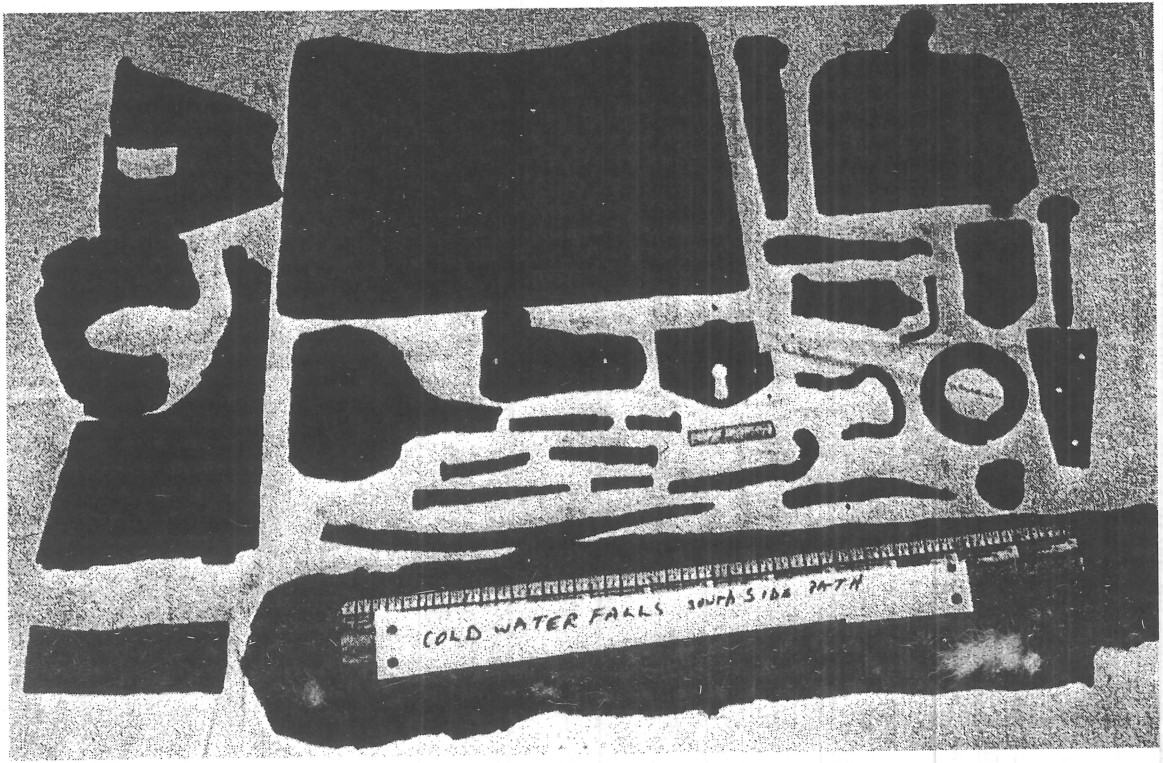
Dave Fudally began his preservation efforts in 1985, knowing that he had to try and save this piece of history.

The first thing Dave did was to call up Bob Clouse, an archaeologist from the Minnesota Historical Society (MHS), to ask permission to go down there and dig a little. Clouse said OK. Dave went down and was thrilled at how rich the area was in archaeological terms. Every shovelful of dirt he pulled up had something in it.

Now Dave has no degree in archaeology, but he had studied the area with maps and books, and knew the layout of the first settlers' village well. For example, at one home site Dave said to himself , "I bet this guy had a boat. Let's see, there's the river, what's the easiest path, I bet he kept it right there." Dave walked over, brushed the leaves away, and there was an oarlock sticking out of the ground! He proceeded to find many more artifacts in the area (sampling shown on following page).

Dave then called Bob Clouse back and told him what he found. Clouse wouldn't return Dave's calls, or go to see the artifacts. Finally Dave just took them over to Clouse's office. Dave had maps that he had drawn up of where everything was, and he showed Clouse everything. Now it turned out that Bob had just published an article in 1983 stating that there was nothing there at Camp Coldwater. Then in 1993, a while after Fudally brought Clouse the artifacts, Clouse published an article called "Recovered," all about blacksmithing tools found in the Camp Coldwater area. He gave no mention of how they were recovered or how he acquired them.

In 1988 Dave started asking the MHS to put up a marker there. He was told to talk to Don Coddington, and did. Dave, Coddington and


COLD WATER FALLS south side path

Steve Osman walked over the site together, and Dave showed the other two what he had found. He asked them to repair the pump house, a little stone structure by the spring, and they did. They didn't have enough money for the roof at that time, which is why it doesn't have one today.

Osman and Coddington both thought a marker was a good idea, and Osman made one in 1991. Now, he made it to say, and it still does say, "This is all that remains of Camp Coldwater," in reference to the spring. When Fudally saw that, he exclaimed, "Steve! That's not true, what about everything I showed you?" Osman replied, "Yes, we know there's a village there, we just don't want people digging." So later, when all this Highway 55 stuff came up, the MHS released a statement saying they've done archaeological studies and there's nothing there. Fudally asked Steve, "Don't you remember?!" Steve didn't have much to say.

After the marker got put up, Fudally started informing the Bureau of Mines about Camp Coldwater. He showed them that even though Fort Snelling didn't own the land, on the federal level, in the National Historic Sites Registry, Camp Coldwater was included within the boundaries of Fort Snelling, and was therefore protected from development. He informed the Bureau of all the laws that pertained to this status. Disregarding these laws, the Bureau proceeded to erect a shed right next to the pond. They leveled a hill to build that huge warehouse on the south side. Fudally walked down there during that time, and saw that where the Bureau had leveled this hill, there was a long, narrow mound of upturned earth. Sprinkled all the way along the top of this mound were artifacts of all kinds. Fudally thought to himself, "This is outrageous!"

So Fudally called up good old Bob Clouse and said, "This is illegal!!! Would you please do something!" Clouse and the MHS did nothing, nothing at all ...

Lynn Ford

My name is Lynn Ford. I got involved with opposing the reroute of Highway 55 in '95; I had just bought a house down by Lake Hiawatha and there was an announcement in the mail from the city and the planners and such, saying there was a community meeting about Highway 55 reconstruction.

So I went to the meeting, it was at Roosevelt High School. There were a lot of people there, and MNDoT planners and city planners, and all these people were up on the stage with their overhead viewers and their maps and everything, talking about moving Highway 55. I'm thinking, 'Moving Highway 55? Why would you move Highway 55?' Prior to this, they had redone Highway 55, they had made it into four lanes, with a median, north of 46th Street, and then to learn that they were changing the course of the road south of 46th Street? I was somebody who knew the area really well because I'm outside all the time. Mother Nature is my sanctuary; for me [the river] is where my soul gets fed, that's where I get my peace. To learn that they were moving this road over, eastward - toward the river - seemed like a giant violation and quite unnecessary; the road already exists, why would you move it?

So, I just sat at this meeting. [I thought], 'What do you mean you're doing this? Who's letting you do this?' It wasn't a meeting where they were like, "We're thinking about doing this, what do you guys think?" They had the plans and everything … the pathetic thing was, they'd put these transparencies up on the overhead so we could see what was going on, and the engineers were just ignorant, they didn't even have the plans on right side up. Nothing they were doing was consistent, and I finally raised my hand and said, "Can you please tell us which way is north?" I don't know if no one was paying attention, but it was like "Hello! None of this makes any sense."

I was appalled at what they were going to be doing. They were gonna be moving giant power lines, they were gonna take away houses, the part that killed me was that they were gonna build so close to the river, and I thought, you can't go close to the river and not upset the river basin and the limestone. For one thing, the river right there is way below the ground level. It's like a river gorge in that area, on the west bank of the Mississippi, and trucks can't be hauling, hauling, hauling over this concrete and not affect the ecology of the river life.

I was sitting through this and it just seemed so ridiculous, and appalling that they were going to be doing this, and I finally raised my hand and I said, "This seems like just an asinine plan. Is it too late to stop this?" Then you could kinda sense that there were other people that thought that this was kinda stupid too, but nobody had said anything yet. All it took really was one person to say something; if I would have heard one person say something I would have said, "Yeah this is ridiculous!" So Schulstad said something like, "Well, no, it's not too late; if we had 5,000 signatures, it could be stopped."

So once the meeting was over, and everybody's leaving their seats, this guy came up to me. He ended up being a guy who owned apartments, he would have lost his property [to the reroute]. Where his apartments were, where the doors opened up, it was all park. With the reroute going in, it would be brick wall, within 50 feet of these doors, and just change the complexion completely of their place, of the whole urban wilderness.

Anyway, this guy was the owner of that apartment. He came up to me and said something about, "You know, we gotta do something." Then more people started to gather and we just put out a sheet of paper right there on that table that night that says, those opposed to this plan, please sign your name. I would say probably about 20 people signed this piece of paper.

Starting from scratch...

My feeling was, we've got to get together, and we've got to start spreading the word to those who don't know about this; because I don't think anyone realized that changing Hiawatha south of 46th was not going to be anything like what they did north of 46th. North of 46th, everybody loved it, it was smoother, whatever, but it was still on the same route. South of 46th, the route was going to change, and I felt it in my gut that it was going to be catastrophic.

So we thought, we've got to get the word out, we've got to try to stop this, let's get some signatures; I mean, Schulstad said, in front of everybody there, "No, it's not too late to stop it."

I'd never done anything like this before; I don't think anyone had. I feel strongly about taking a stand for the natural environment, and old people, and animals. For me, that reroute was wrong because of all the animals' habitat it would displace and wreck. I was like, where are all these animals going to live? I notice animals, I see where they live. That's what it was for me.

I called all these people and we arranged to get together one night, at this little hole-in-the-wall that isn't there anymore, over on 34th avenue. The common thing about everybody was no one wanted to see this reroute. We decided to call it a reroute. I mean, the notice in the mail called it the reconstruction of Highway 55, and that didn't say what it was. In time we decided to call our campaign Stop the Reroute. Carol knew a couple people; otherwise, no one knew each other.

It was a mishmash of people. The fact that people came to this meeting meant they felt strongly. For some people, this was another grain of hope that they could live in their house. What we thought we could do is what we were always told to do, which is contact your city council member. Contact your mayor. They are supposed to represent us. Then anytime we contacted anybody they were like, "Oh, that's a done deal." We said, "You know what? It's not a done deal. And it's a wrong deal. It shouldn't be done."

It was exhausting. After the first meeting we lost people, because it was the blind leading the blind. Some people had passion at the meeting, but you would get home the next day and not have time to do this or that. We met every week and had goals. Part of human nature is that not everyone works the same, and some people had expectations of what other people should do. We had a lot of struggles within. Everyone had passion about it, but we didn't know how to keep going, and we weren't having any successes. It was like trying to push a giant boulder up a mountain.

We didn't know what the most productive thing to do would be. We went door-knocking. We also needed money, to make copies of flyers. We would try to go to events where we could set up a table. Then it was like, "Who will staff these tables? And where's a table? Does anybody have a table?" There were people who were just doing their regular try-to-keep-up-with-things life. Then this felt like a job, but we weren't getting paid! Where was the reward?

Community outreach…

There was a guy named Chuck. He lived down there, and he had so much energy to do this all the time. He is no longer with us, but if it wasn't for him this wouldn't have persisted. People would just get tired and leave, and they wouldn't come back. Anyway, every weekend Chuck would set up a table at the trail head with pamphlets, to tell people what was planned. People were astonished. We had postcards, and we would give people stamps to put on them. We had a list of council members, and people could look up who their council member was if they didn't know, and send them this postcard. I can not tell you how many postcards we sent down to city hall, and the cost of putting a stamp on every one. None of us had any money!

That might have been the main way of getting the word out, just us being down there. It was always Chuck's stuff, but we would take turns personing the table. Every person that came up, nobody wanted to see this happen, because obviously they were using this area! Every person that came up, you'd say the same thing. It was like, "Oh my God. Is there a way to be more efficient?" Sitting here all day long saying the same thing to one person. We needed to hit the masses.

So we called the Nokomis Messenger, which was the paper at the time. We said, "You need to serve the community by getting the word out about what the truth is on this thing." The paper did not want to get involved in the controversy. There were a lot of people who did not want to get involved.

"We finally ended up hiring a lawyer."

People had told us, "Oh, we've hired a lawyer before, it doesn't work." We were like, "We need to find a good lawyer, who will work for free." We found this guy who had a good environmental record, had a big victory in northern Minnesota up on the iron range. He was a nice guy, willing to work with us. He also didn't have a staff to work with him, and it was a lot! We had to go fight City Hall, the State, the Historical Society. We had to fight all these enmeshed institutions, and none of them wanted us heard. It felt like a real conspiracy, it was like, "We have a voice, why aren't we getting anything in the papers?"

So we had some guidance from the attorney. We needed to do investigative research. We needed to disprove a lot of what the city said. [The city said] they took the route they were supposed to in terms of process. We said, "You did not. Who were at these meetings [you speak of]?" It turns out it was a lot of commercial businesses who were north of 46th. These "Community Advisory Boards" [they claimed to have formed] were people who would profit from having the road built.

"It just didn't make sense."

All of the officials said, "We have to do the reroute to get light rail." My argument was, and it got in the City Pages, if you want to ensure ridership on light rail, which you need, to make it worth it, why make a bigger, faster, scenic, four-lane highway beside it? If you want people to ride light rail, why make it easier for them to drive their car? It didn't make any sense. What we got here is a budget. They all exchange money around, at the expense of what? The fox dens, the hawk nests, owl nests, all the little sanctuaries that nature provides for the animals.

Another angle we tried to get people involved from was, with this reroute, there was going to be a tunnel. They called it a land bridge, but it was a tunnel for the vehicles. Any vehicle carrying hazardous materials can't go through a tunnel. So they would have to get off and go down 34th Avenue. We went to all the houses and businesses there, leafleted and door-knocked. We said, "Do you guys want semis bouncing down your little street?" They were all sleeping with the City Council anyway. The Nokomis Business Association is pro-build. The Nokomis Shoe guy said, "I want all those semis stopping at my store to buy their shoes and boots." I was like, "Hello? I'm not going to buy shoes here, if this is what you're going to let happen to my neighborhood."

"The guy was prophetic."

So Chuck had what we felt was a very extreme, radical idea. He was a great artist, and he put out this little pamphlet. He called it the Bulldozer. We would chain ourselves to the bulldozers. We were like, "Oh my God! That's so radical! We're gonna lose people, we're never gonna get people to come over to our side and understand that this is wrong." Look what ended up happening.

It got to that point simply because the representatives weren't listening to us. The people who are hired, elected, to do a job, don't do their jobs. They go in, and they do what the city wants them to do. [Their job description is] "This is what we're doing; you make it happen in your part of town."

Carol Kratz

I was the last homeowner on Riverview Road before the destruction. For 40 years I had heard of this highway that was going to probably take my home and, much more, destroy the only urban wilderness in the city of Minneapolis.

February 1996

When I started fighting the "Process" in February 1996, it was with a handful of concerned citizens known as Park and River Alliance. A petition table was set up at the entrance to the Minnehaha Bike Trail. We acquired over 7,000 signatures and thought this would stop the highway. What a disillusion that was. The Mayor and City Council would not even look at them. I was finally told by Dennis

Schulstad (then council person for my ward) that a million signatures would do no good. This after I had spent every weekend from March to November at the petition table, talking with people from all walks of life; people who were supportive and shocked that the highway would be rerouted through the park.

October 1996

Park and River Alliance did file a lawsuit against the Park Board and the Department of Transportation on October 24th, 1996. We retained Grant Merritt of Minneapolis, a lawyer associated with environmental issues. The suit related to the "4F" requirements by the Federal Department of Transportation - to wit - "the state can not use parkland for a highway unless there is no other feasible alternative." This suit was put on the court calendar where it would wither on the vine; meanwhile, MNDoT proceeded with the planning stage for the reroute of Highway 55. Our hopes for a timely hearing were dashed. The lawsuit was eventually heard in May 1998 - another episode in the chain of events.

January 1997

The coalition "Stop The Reroute" was formed in January 1997. This group had many different supporters - The Audubon Society, Sierra Club and others. There were protest rallies where I, among others, had an opportunity to speak. We tried to work with elected officials. There was a city election that year and flyers were distributed in an effort to get a new Mayor and new members on the City Council. This was, of course, futile.

Tours of the area were made available but we got very few of our elected officials to even walk the route and see what was being sacrificed for this highway. It was disheartening and left one with the feeling of despair and resignation, but we all kept on spinning our wheels hoping someone would listen and see that this was so wrong. It was only in that summer, 1997, when we became aware of Camp Coldwater Spring - a natural spring nestled inside the Bureau of Mines property - one more reason to preserve the area.

February 1998

In February 1998, I, along with two other home owners on the South Minnehaha Park side of Riverview Road, received our condemnation papers from the Minnesota Department of Transportation, signed by Hubert Humphrey III. I was to be out of my home by June 1998. My two neighbors sold out right away, but I was not ready to give up the fight. I felt that as long as I held on to my home I was also protecting the park and wilderness that would be destroyed, not to mention Camp Coldwater - the birthplace of Minnesota.

My original condemnation hearing was scheduled for May 13th, 1998. I so desperately wanted this area preserved, I retained an attorney and was given a three month "Stay of Execution."

May 1998

There was a reason for the postponement of my condemnation suit. The Park and River Alliance law suit of October, 1996, was going to be heard on May 1st, 1998. This suit which had been in limbo for 18 months was heard by U.S. District Court Judge Donald Alsop and summarily thrown out because the statute of limitations had run out.

Grant Merritt, our lawyer, filed an appeal. This would be heard in Federal Court in May 1999, (when the reroute would be moot), by three federal judges. These men from out of state would throw out the case. None of the judges showed interest in the merits of the case. Park and River Alliance rallied one last time to attend this hearing.

Dave Fudally

When you know too much…

In 1997 Dave saw a map in the Star Tribune, showing plans of a road going through Camp Coldwater, with a Light Rail Transit (LRT) crossing there in the Bureau of Mines. Fudally thought to himself, 'No, they can't do that, Camp Coldwater is on the National Registry.' He called Steve Osman, who worked for the MHS, to ask what was going on around this. Osman assured Dave that everything was fine, and the MHS was keeping their eyes on it. Dave reminded Osman that the land was on the National Registry and that they had better do something to prevent it from being developed. So the MHS scheduled a meeting. Dave heard about it and said, "Great, I'll be there!" Osman said slowly, "No, Dave, I think you better not come." Dave said, "What do you mean, I better not come?" They were all friends at the time, but suddenly Dave was being excluded from all meetings concerning Camp Coldwater.

Dave then called up Dennis Gimmisted, who was also working for the MHS, and asked him for the Camp Coldwater file from the National Historic Registry. Dennis wouldn't give it to Dave. Dave was shocked, and said, "What are you talking about, Dennis? It's me!" Dennis replied, "Put your request in writing and I'll pass it by the lawyers." Don Coddington called up to try and change Gimmisted's mind on the matter, but he couldn't get the file for Dave either. Now first of all, this was public information. Second of all, again, they were all friends at the time, so this was just weird.

Dave then called up Beth Bolland, who was in charge of the National Historic Registry. He asked, "Is Camp Coldwater on the National Registry?" Bolland replied that it was, and looked up the file for Dave. She said it showed, "Changes being made, incomplete." The MHS was trying to take Camp Coldwater off the registry. Dave was in disbelief, thinking, 'This is not in the best interest of preserving history.' Dave sent Beth evidence of the history of the area, saying, "You can't take this off the Registry." It turned out that MNDoT was asking the MHS for permission to build the road. They never finished the paperwork, so Camp Coldwater remained on the Registry for the time being.

You scratch my back...

Around the same time, Martin Sabo allocated $2 million from the Federal Department of Transportation (DOT) to the MHS, citing an exposition the MHS was going to have on "Early Transportation in Minnesota." The article announcing the exposition spoke of Indian trails, primitive roads, steamboats, paved roads, and highways, only early highways of course. There was going to be a public presentation of this money. Dave called up Nina Archeble, who was in charge of funds at the MHS, and said, "I'd like to be there, where is it going to be?" Upon hearing that, and knowing Dave well, the MHS cancelled the public event and presented the money behind closed doors instead. Dave called the MHS again and said, "You know what? I'm going to save you guys a million dollars. You can cancel your exposition on transportation. You give me $1 million dollars, and I will go down to Camp Coldwater and give tours about the early transportation of Minnesota from nine to five, every day, for the rest of my life. You can keep the other million." The folks at the MHS all had a good laugh and then hung up on him.

Dave was told that the MHS was really having trouble around that time, even just paying bills. Sabo got another $4 million from the DOT for them later.

So then Dave started going to community meetings that were being held at Roosevelt High School in south Minneapolis, with Dennis Schulstad, the city council member for the area at the time. Dave grew up with Schulstad, and remembers him as a very fair guy. Now Schulstad was up there saying that he and Martin Sabo had walked through the area and there was nothing there. At the meeting on November 18th,1997, Dave got up and mentioned Camp Coldwater, and gave a little speech of what he knew. That was the first anyone there had heard of it, and their eyes were kind of opened that night. Dave contacted Mary Jo Iverson, a community member who was opposed to the reroute, and they swapped what information they had.

So now people in the community were talking about legal avenues to stop this road. Grant Merritt was the lawyer for the group that had formed, Stop the Reroute, and they brought the issue of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to court. Now, the EIS that had been prepared for the project many years ago stated that the area south of 54th Street would be dealt with at the time of construction, so that area had obviously not been evaluated at all.

So when Grant Merritt was bringing this to court, the judge asked, "Do you want these on file as separate areas? Do you want to address the environmental impact that the road would have on these two areas (north and south of 54th Street) separately?" He asked this like three times! Grant Merritt says, "No, no, put them together, we want the area south of 54th Street included with the rest of it." Dave observed that this one statement exempted MNDoT from being required to conduct an EIS for that entire area south of 54th.

In February of 1998 Dave took the 1837 map and four archaeologists, Dave Radford with the State Park, Jim Jones with the Minnesota Department of Indian Affairs, Judy Thompson and a guy named Neil, both with the Institute for Minnesota Archaeology (IMA), all down to Camp Coldwater. Dave walked them through the whole area, showing them everything he knew. They all agreed that there was a village there. They said, "We do not dispute one thing you've said, Dave." "Well thank you," replied Dave. Radford said that the area should be marked and a dig performed. Jim Jones said, "Damn right! I felt spirits when we weren't even halfway here." Dave knows Jones to be a person that feels spirits. Dave only knows two other people like this, but he says that these people, when he takes them down to some place or another to show them something, they'll be walking along, and the person will say, "This is it, isn't it?" Dave says that it will be, every time. They just know.

Dave also thinks that Jones should have done something. When Dave asked him about it later, Jones told him, "Dave, I can't always get what I want. The way things work, it's give and take. Not that this is one of these times, but sometimes I have to let something go in order to save something else ..." Dave felt like that was pretty sad, too.

So when Dave walked these guys through, Dave Radford told him that he was ordered by Arne Carlson to do an archaeological study and a verbal report back. Dave remarked that this was unheard of! Archaeological studies, real ones, must be written by law. He noted that a verbal report back is ridiculous.

* * *

Now, Camp Coldwater was still on the National Registry. As long as that stood, MNDoT could not build their road. So here's what Dave watched them do. Scott Anfinson, another archaeologist for the Minnesota Historical Society, redrew the line that included Camp Coldwater as a historical site on the National Historic Registry. He redrew it to include only a corner of the pond. His reasoning was, "We'll preserve the aesthetics of the site, pump in water from somewhere else if the natural flow is disturbed." Fudally, amongst others, thought this was a ludicrous idea, so they went to court, and Dave got up and testified. He said, "Sorry, Scott, this is spring water. It's not Camp Faucet Water, not Camp City Water. To preserve the integrity of that pond the water coming into it has to be spring water." Fudally was surprised and pleased to find that statement held up in court. That's when the bill was drafted to protect the spring, hopefully forever. **(See bill, p. 320)** After they built the road they redrew the line back, to include Camp Coldwater again.

Lynn Levine

I got involved about a year before the encampment, when we were doing all the things that they say we should do. I came down to walk the land, and this botanist showed me some kind of wetland grass, and the root of that grass went down 35 feet. I had just worked trying to save the Ewing Wetlands in Phalen, and to me to find something like that was so exciting, I thought, 'We can't let them take this too. They can't just keep taking every single green place on earth and turning it into a road or a housing project.'

A slightly flawed process...

They gave us two days notice for the public meeting they promised to have. It was in a high school auditorium, filled with people. They said, "Here's how we're going to do it. We're going to have three topics; the curve in the road, the stop light, and [one other topic]. We're going to have four people for and four people against." So people were upset. I got to be one of the four people on the first topic, and I said, "I'm not going to speak about this topic, I'm going to speak about the process in this room! There are not four people for [the road]; the people in this room are against the road." There was cheering ... Of course [the facilitators] ignored it as if I hadn't said it.

The other thing they did in that meeting was polarize people. They wouldn't talk about, "How can we solve this issue?" If you were concerned about the curve, or you wanted that stoplight, then you were on the side of the people who wanted the road. We were made to behave in a way that was outrageous, because we were being treated so unfairly, and then the neighbors were told, "See? It's just a bunch of outside agitators."

Be careful what you speak for...

A gentleman by the name of Greg Pratt wrote a letter. [He wrote that] he had read that the air quality would not be affected by the road, and that was not true, that if you took out an oak savannah and put in a road, that it was going to have a direct impact on the air quality, and as a member of the pollution control agency, although not speaking in his official capacity, he had to state that. He got suspended from the agency, for one week, with no pay, as a disciplinary measure for that action.

I remember being told to call this man named Eric Kilberg. He was the Pollution Control Agency person [who's job it was to review the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the reroute project]. [After doing this], he said that he did not believe that the EIS was adequate because it had been made 30 years ago, when certain laws weren't in place. He [told me] that Dan Dorvan from the MNDoT "got defensive" about that and pretty much let him know that he'd better sign it, and he was reminded about what happened to Greg Pratt, so [Kilberg] signed it. Then [MNDoT] said to the Watershed District, "It's OK with the Pollution Control Agency, so why are you holding it up?"

I was at the [meeting of the] Watershed District, which was the final permitting authority, when MNDoT said to them in front of the public, "If you try to not give us the permit for this road, then we're going to go to the state legislature and peel back your rights for erosion control that you won in the last session." Then the Watershed District voted to permit the road, with the agreement that there would be wells put in, to monitor the water, and that they could stop [the road] at any time. MNDoT did not put in those wells till the construction had been going on for nine or ten months, and only after this huge public meeting at the Watershed District, so there was no baseline data. So now when they say there's no diminution to the water, the baseline they're using is about a year into the project.

So the permit [from the Watershed District] was given conditional on gathering this data. Then Dan Dorvan [from MNDoT] went down to sign off. What you have to say is, did you get all the permits. Did the Pollution Control Agency say the EIS was adequate, yes; he had that piece of paper. Did the Watershed District sign off, and he blatantly lied, and said yes. He did not say there had been a conditional permit; he said they had signed off. So that day when the construction began, when all our friends got beat up, and sat in the road, [MNDoT was] illegally doing what they did. I contacted everyone when I found that out, every public news agency… nothing. Never even got reported.

Hey, nice loophole!

An extremely disturbing piece of information that I learned is this; if an agency such as MNDoT comes in and gives false information to an agency such as the Watershed District, and the Watershed makes a recommendation like, "OK you can do the project," then there's an appeal process where the public can appeal it. If in the appeal process you bring in factual documentation that the information that they were given was false, that's irrelevant. What's relevant is, did they make a good decision based on the information they were given? [When you appeal], you're suing the agency [such as the Watershed District] themselves, and the agency can only go according to what they were given.

[When we were lobbying the State regarding protection of the Coldwater Spring] I reminded the Watershed District about that. I said, "If you say yes, and if we are right that this information is not accurate, then that is it, there's no recourse, because you said yes based on false information." That's when they said they would hire an independent hydrologist and they would get some of the data …

* * *

Steve Minn said that the city council had been lied to back when they approved it. I said, "Now that you know you've been lied to …" He said, "It's too late, it's through the city council, we can't back up …"

The mayor's office talked about how there would be no "net park loss," because when they put the bridge across the road, and a parking lot on the bridge, that's considered park acreage now. The oak savannah was traded for a parking lot on a bridge over a highway.

Bob Greenberg

I was raised primarily in Brooklyn Center, MN, blocks from the Mississippi river. My father brought me down to Minnehaha Park all the time as a child. He was just amazed that there were waterfalls in the middle of the city. He loved how wild it was down by the river. That had great impact on my childhood, and I have continued this relationship with this place as an adult. So when I first heard about the plans to put the highway through, I gasped and decided to learn more about it.

I had been a professional organizer for a decade and had grown weary of the ineffectiveness of playing by the rules, so I was involved with Big Woods Earth First! at the time. Having found out that this reroute plan had been going on for a long time, and that legal stuff didn't look very fruitful, I recommended to other folks that we should keep an eye on this. That was about two years before the encampment began, in mid-1996.

Leona and I went to a Stop the Reroute meeting that was happening at the Gathering Grounds. There we met Susu and Mary Jo and many other people, too many to name. Susu was talking about this place being sacred to Native Americans. That was the first that I had heard about it. I found that interesting and possible I didn't know that, having gone there all my life. It stuck in the back of my mind for some time.

Over the next year-and-a-half, we kept an eye on it as we focused primarily on forest issues. After a takeover of a Forest Service office in Duluth over Little Alfie, State Senator Doug Johnson told us to stop coming up to the North woods and telling them how to live, but instead we should worry about what was happening in our own back yard "where they're puttin' a road through that state park" - Minnehaha park. After quite some time Carol Kratz was contacted by Bill and Leona, and they talked with her for some time about the issue, her involvement, and her feelings about this, and asked for permission to do something, maybe a little out of the ordinary, to defend the earth. With her blessing, we decided that this was something that we would take on.

"So at that point, I started to look into it more deeply."

In early Summer of 1997, a friend, and participant in a previous incarnation of Earth First! in the Twin Cities, Fly (he was known here as Maggot before going out west to defend the Redwoods) visited Minnehaha Park and did a climbing training and walked through the area in question, helping us pick out good trees for treesits.

A little later that summer, BWEF! had a Midwest Regional Rendezvous and skill share. Susu Jeffries came and spoke to us about the reroute. People who came to this rendezvous from Iowa, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Wisconsin and Minnesota all ended up at one encampment or another.

Throughout the spring and summer of 1998, we conducted non-violence trainings, tours of the area in danger, and staffed a table at the bike trail head to let people know about the issue, ID supporters, build a phone tree and recruit direct action and support folk. The tent at Camp Two Pines went up around this time, and was a base of operations for direct action preparation, as well as a place to store educational materials.

At the time, I was an organizer for SEIU, but was also doing free-lance journalism. In June of 1998, as all legal means to make the people's will heard seemed exhausted, I did some investigative journalism and called the demolition company that had the contract to remove the asbestos before destruction (public records) of the homes could begin. I inquired as to their stand on this controversial issue, and what date they were planning on beginning work. I was told August 10th was the project start date for asbestos removal in the remaining houses on Riverview Road. I brought this to the attention of the group and we began to plan accordingly.

We placed an article with the Earth First! Journal "Calling All Squatters" to bring folks from around the country, since there were so many houses and we could only physically defend a few with our resources.

We needed help.

One of the biggest concerns that I had personally was the fact that white activists were out there saying that the land was sacred. I didn't see any Native Americans at the Gathering Grounds meeting where that was being said, and I knew from my experience in organizing that white environmentalists use Native American issues to further their own agenda, time and time and time again. And oftentimes, even if they think they're doing something good, they're doing something that's rather destructive. I did not want anything to do with that.

A respectful approach

So I was out to find out, if this is sacred ground to Native Americans, who are the people who lived in this area, and is it really sacred ground to them, and if it is, are they willing to stand up and say something about it? Because if they are, I will stand with them. And if it is sacred ground, and they're not going to stand up for it, I'm not going to talk about it in those terms, I'm only going to talk about it in my terms, why the place is important to me, and I would call out whites who used it to further the issue. And if it isn't true, we damn well better clear this up right now.

I had tried to get Vernon Bellecourt, in the past, to get involved in some environmental issues that I had been working on. And that was exactly the approach that I had taken ... trying to get him involved in some things that I was working on ... not the way to go about these things (I hadn't learned that lesson yet, being an arrogant, educated, American male with all the privilege I have)! But he was really the only person in the American Indian community here that I knew of at the time. So I called Michael Bellanger from KFAI who does a radio show. He told me to call Anita from the Circle newspaper, who told me to call Vernon Bellecourt.

So I called Vernon, and he told me a story about how people out in Mound, Minnesota were trying to fight this marina, and there were burial mounds where the marina was going to be built. They contacted him and said, "Can you come out here and help us stop this?" He went to a public hearing, and he was going to speak out on it, but before he had a chance, the developer who was speaking said, "All of you people are complaining about the mounds being dug up for this marina, but all your houses were built on them, and you had no problem when we told you we had to dig them up then, but now that you want to fight this marina, you're willing to use that to further your cause ..." and Vernon said that he walked out. That is indicative of white environmentalist behavior. And he told me to call him back. That was the end of the conversation! I called him back. He told me that the person I needed to talk to was Chris Leith.

Chris told me the same story as Vernon had concerning the mounds in Mound, and said he was running out to a sweat, and to call him back in a week. I did. For over an hour he told me story after story of similar occurrences, and then said, "So do you understand why I'm wary about telling you who you should go and talk to?" I said, "I do understand, and that's exactly why I'm trying to find out, because there's someone who's saying that this is sacred ..." He said, "You need to call Linda Brown, and this is her number."

So I thanked him, hung up and called her immediately. It was Saturday night, nine or something. I said, "Chris Leith gave me your number, I would like to talk with you. "Well, why don't you come out tomorrow morning?" I drove out the following morning. Linda and Bob Brown welcomed me into their house and Jim Albrecht was there too. I really got a good feeling from them, that they were fantastic, loving people. I handed them information about Earth First!, and said, "I want you to know who I am and who we are. They read over the principles of Big Woods Earth First!; what we stood for, plus our non-violence code. Then I told them, "Where the Minnesota and Mississippi rivers come together, there's a bunch of trees and a spring, some of the trees are ancient trees, one of the finest examples of pristine oak savannah in North America ..." I told them what the place meant to me and what the argument about protecting it was.

Then I told them what we were planning to do, which is something that I felt I needed to do, so that they had a clear understanding of what they would be getting involved in if they joined us. It was very difficult and against my security consciousness to reveal the type of details about lockdowns, barricades, tree sits and other things of this nature, but I felt that I needed to be honest and prepare them, since what we were doing was new in the United States in an urban area, and we were taking the technology of resistance to a higher level. And as BWEF! knew, but most mainstream Americans don't, is that the state will use torture and every other means available to them to evict us, so I let them know that.

Then I told them, "There are white people involved in this campaign, who are saying this is sacred to Native Americans." I explained to them all my concerns about white environmentalists using Native issues, and that is why I had come looking for them. If they were concerned, or if this place really was significant or sacred to them, they could learn more by contacting Carol Kratz, and I gave them her address on Riverview Road. That's what it was left at; they said that they were going to the Sundance, which ended on the 9th, and if they joined us they would be there on the 10th.

The next I heard is when they pulled up. I had no idea whether they were gonna show up or not. Seeing them make this connection with who they are and the land, makes me think that going to the Mendota Mdewakanton Dakota Community is one of the most important things I'll do in my life.

Honestly, to tell you, when I went and met them, I thought 'Mississippi and Minnesota Rivers come together here, it's probably sacred ground, but this is where the fort is. There's not gonna be any of these people left. I didn't know the history that well at that time I thought, 'Well, the fort was put here, they wiped everyone out as they pushed the frontier west. Forced them out of here or wiped them out.'

Another thing I have fond memories of is in June when two women who ended up occupying the North house and I got cement and dug out and installed a sleeping dragon in front of the North house to see how much noise we could realistically get away with before we had the lockdown making party. A few weeks later nine people from Wisconsin and seven people from Minnesota made eight more dragons behind the houses on Riverview Road. It took 5 hours, but the cement had nearly 5 weeks to dry.

Many of us who planned for and set up the initial free state envisioned it as an opportunity to train new activists. Bill and I recruited the Ruckus Society, whom we had a relationship with, to do a Zero-Cut action camp (ghosts of Little Alfie?) at Harmony Park in Geneva, MN just a few weeks after the encampment would start. This amazing training changed the overall skill level of the occupation's inhabitants, got our issue out in the activist community - recruitment and visibility, and increased our legitimacy with funders. I raised $7,500 for the Ruckus Society training from Headwaters Fund. They conducted their site visit the evening after the very first raid on the utilities, and there were hundreds of people of all colors and backgrounds there to support after seeing it on the 5PM news. The nexxus of these events was planned for, but never expected, and was the source of much of our strength early on, as well as a great part of our longevity and endurance.

Methane, Solstice, Tumbleweed, and Bob's dog Mystic dance in Bob's living room while Bob was in jail for throwing a pie. Bob's 700-square-foot apartment at 27th St. and 2nd Ave. in Minneapolis served as an off-site base of operations for both camps, providing jail support, media work, materials development and production, non-security sensitive communications, strategy, a crash pad for people from camp (27 people and four dogs on one very cold night), a full refrigerator, fundraising, community outreach and more.

CHAPTER TWO:
WHAT NO ONE WAS EXPECTING

One of the funny stories was, when a bunch of us were up at Little Alfie, there were a bunch of folks who were kind of upset that we were up in their neck of the woods messin' around with timber sales. One of the state representatives made a joke, they said, "If you leave here and go back down to the city I'll help you fight that road they're trying to put through the park." For a lot of us, that was the first we'd heard about it, and we were like, "OK, we will. Thank you."

-Marshall Lough

Marshall Lough

Some people who had been active in Earth First! had been going to the Park and River Alliance meetings for a while. I remember going down to some of the rallies by the old train depot. It was a lot of community members, lawyers in particular, talkin' about how they were going to stop this thing through the legal process, cause they had a great case. Violation of federal law...

In general, people who were involved with Earth First! didn't feel like it was our place to step in at that point. We would show up at their rallies and support them, but the tactics that we used were not wanted at that point. That was 1996/97. During the summer of '97 there was the sense that they had a good case; they had gone and gathered the 10,000 signatures, and done a lot of good organizing work. [Then] when the court threw the case out on the statute of limitations, saying, "You have good arguments, but you should have filed this in the mid 80's", there was a lot of anger, and a real split in the Park and River Alliance.

By that time the Stop the Reroute coalition had sort of morphed out of that, had been involved during the time of the lawsuit, but were kind of skeptical of it ... thought it should be tried, but were more open to other avenues. A lot of people had seen what had happened at Little Alfie, seen that not only did we stop the sale but also made the Forest Service have to look at 38 other sales and cancel them, out of just sitting in the middle of the road and serving coffee!

Now, Bill in particular and a few other people had been building a relationship with Carol and Al Kratz, recognizing that they were a real critical factor in all this, because MNDoT had pretty successfully bought out everyone else [who lived on that block]. A lot of real sadness, there was a suicide on the block, but mostly people being like, "Look, they always get their way, you can't fight MNDoT."

Connecting with the community

So there started to be contact with Carol, just Minnesota visits, cookies and milk, and listening to Carol and what she was feeling. I think it was April or May of '98 when Bill came to me. I had been doing some work with Earth First! but was focusing more on indigenous land struggle issues. He came to me and said, "This could get really interesting because I think the last residents on this block want us to come in." I was like, "Really. That's pretty phenomenal." So he wanted me to go along and talk more seriously about who we were and what we did, and what they would and wouldn't be comfortable with.

So I remember going to her backyard that afternoon and meeting my grandmother, literally, so familiar to me. I remember sitting on her wrought iron furniture and being like, "So I understand you've tried a lot of things." She kind of went through the history, brought out the scrapbook, photos of the old rallies … It came down to a point blank question, what she was comfortable with, as far as setting up dragons and lockdowns, was she OK with that? The answer was pretty much yes. She had tried everything. She wasn't going to be doing these things herself, but she was friendly to it, and she thought that someone should stand up at this point. Actually I think she felt all of a sudden a lot less isolated, like, "Yeah, come on in!" I'm not sure she really knew exactly what that entailed …

Almost immediately after that a bunch of people came in and erected Camp Two Pines, which was a large canvas army tent in Carol's front yard.

[So] people began strategizing: "If they come in, they're going to take the whole block, we don't want all the burden on Carol, in her yard. So maybe one lockdown on the north side, one on the south side, one kind of in the middle, and various ones here and there." There were a lot of nights of people at Camp Two Pines doing work; most of the physical work of putting the lockdowns in place happened in the last couple weeks before the August 10th deadline.

Some people did the research, found which company would be doing what, and found the date August 10th. We didn't know if that would be demolition or just surveying, but we were gonna be there.

A crazy night

That was a crazy night, an affinity group came from Wisconsin, people came from Stop the Reroute to help, which we weren't expecting. We had radio communication, scanners going, Camp Two Pines was the com station. Really you just felt such an intense bond with each other. This was a big transformation for the group; Little Alfie was ad hoc, no lockdown strategy … this was very elaborate, both with lockdowns and all the community groundwork that had been laid … Throughout the summer we had been petitioning at the little table at Camp Two Pines, and we had this Beat the Bulldozers pledge. It said, "If we go out and stand in front of bulldozers, will you come and stand with us?" Tons of people signed up … We tried to get a phone tree set up, a house with a fax machine, potential jail support, it really was pretty intense infrastructure.

So that night, the cement is still drying, we're trying to figure out how to nonchalantly get the tripod through the woods, tons of people running around all dressed in black … As we all know there were dogs right across the street, and they started barking. I was just thinking, 'Anyone looking out their window right now must be thinking, "What the hell is going on?"' There were tons of people! It was an immense amount of work. It felt like we had superhuman strength, carrying these super heavy poles, which afterwards I couldn't pick up again. There was intense adrenaline. And people [just showed up]. I'll never forget Paul, walking out of the woods, just when we needed one more person to put the tripod up.

So that's the day Jimmy and Bear and Mike and Bev and everyone shows up, direct from Pipestone [Sundance]. And the rest is history.

Joel

My name is Joel, and I'm almost 32. I'm from the east coast. I graduated from high school but never finished college. I've been involved with Earth First! and other radical environmental groups since I was about 15. I originally became involved in stuff like that because of punk music, and the prevalent culture that [existed] where I grew up.

I first became aware of the whole Highway 55 struggle at least a year before the occupation happened, through Earth First! meetings. Our group was monitoring the whole situation as it went through the process. They had something like 7,000 signatures on a petition against the reroute, court cases, a lot of different avenues were pursued before it started to become apparent that all those things were just going to be ignored. So we saw it as an opportunity for Earth First! to do something in the city, and connect that with stopping the amount of roads being developed. It was [also] an urban wilderness; I remember seeing deer and raccoons walking by in the middle of the night. And it was people being displaced out of their homes. The whole aspect of that area being a sacred site for Native people was discovered a little bit later.

We met with Carol Kratz and got permission to set up a tent on a vacant lot right next to her house. We had an information booth, we even had a mailbox. We knew that they were going to come and bulldoze the remaining houses. We found out when it was going to happen, and decided at that time to try and occupy the houses and prevent them from being bulldozed.

We didn't just decide to go and do that one day, there was probably about a year of groundwork done before that. Communicating with neighborhood groups, Sierra Club, Carol Kratz, setting up and information booth, actually finding out when it was going to happen, doing creative snooping.

Pretty much all of us who started that first action thought we'd be there for about an hour before the police showed up and arrested everybody. We were a little bit surprised when the first day came and went.

Carol Kratz

I met Bill at a protest down at city hall, for the trees up north. We had heard there was a protest, so we figured maybe if we went down there, somebody would help us with our problem. So we did talk to Bill down there. We explained what was happening out in South Minneapolis. I guess he must have gone back and talked it over with the Earth First!

people.

So then one day I was out in the yard and here somebody pulled in, came over and introduced himself to me, and it was Bill. He told me that Earth First! wanted to help with our fighting the highway. I just stood there and thought, 'Oh my gosh. This can't be possible!' We had been hoping and praying that somebody would come along and listen to us. We'd been down at the petition table talking and talking to people, and [they said], "Oh yeah, we don't want this highway," but did they ever come forward and say, "I'll help"? No. They never did.

So it was just unbelievable. The Stop the Reroute group was very glad [to see Earth First! get involved]. You have to realize, we had been working really hard, for a couple years. We were tired. So it was like, "Now maybe we can let down a little bit and see if somebody else can get the message across. We tried hard enough."

Then [Bill] told me they were gonna put up a tent, and he thought it should be in our front yard. I wanted to say, "No! Please not our front yard." Well they came back to put it up, and they did decide to put it up, beside the two [pines], instead of my front yard.

Editor: What made you apprehensive about the tent being in your front yard?

Carol: Well ... the neighbors. This was in the end of May, and we knew they probably weren't going to come until August, so I thought, 'What are the neighbors going to think?' One of the neighbors did finally say, "Would you get that blue tent out of there!" And my kids, how was I going to explain this to my kids? So I just told them that [these people] were interested in taking on the battle. They were there to pass out flyers and information, just like we were doing down at the petition table, but they had to have a place to stay! So that went over. They took that. Then of course I thought of the police. They're gonna be driving by, how long are they gonna let that tent sit there before they say something. But they never did.

So they put the tent up, that was right after Memorial Day. They had someone there all the time, from then on. It was great. I felt very, very protected. Then when the Native Americans came I felt really protected! I knew nobody was going to come and do anything. Of course by that time MNDoT was telling my kids that there was some bad men out there.

They were so worried, they had to get us out of the house, because there were some bad people out there that were going to come and do something to maybe destroy the house and us. When [my daughter] told me that I said, "Oh for God's sakes, if it's anybody, it's MNDoT!" That of course never happened. They [MNDoT] were very conniving.

I didn't know much about the lockdowns. I knew they were doing it all along, [but] I didn't know how they did it. I didn't ask questions because I figured what I didn't know didn't hurt me. I did not get in any of the houses until just before I left. Someone took me in the North House, and showed me what they had done in there. I was just amazed. That's when I said, "So that's why I had concrete dust all over my garage and heard this pitter patter of feet all night! It was just incredible, what they had done. I was just as surprised when I walked down the street the first time and saw Garret with his arm in the ground.

Editor: How did you come to a place where you felt like you could trust those people, without knowing specifics like that?

Carol: I was putting my safety in their hands; I just got to know them well enough, and I just felt like they were not going to let anything happen to me, or [my husband] Al. They all had such good personalities, so loving, everybody that came before the raid. It was wonderful.

Then when the Native Americans came to my door, that was another time. Oh my gosh! It was a Sunday afternoon, and I was sitting down eating dinner. I saw these people go by in the window and I wondered, 'Who in the heck is that?!' So they introduced themselves as Bob and Linda Brown, Michael and Bev Scott.

They had just found out from Bob Greenberg about the highway, what it was going to do to the trees, that they even had sacred trees ... so we talked for a couple hours, and we took the tour, all the way down to the river. [Mary Jo was] just as awed as I was at having [the Native Americans] come there. So they said they were going down to Sundance, and when they came back they would put up their tipis. I thought, 'Oh yeah, right.' But they did!!

Jim Anderson

My name is Jim Anderson, I'm the Cultural Chairman of the Mendota Dakota Mdewakanton Community (MMDC). We were assimilated to the point where we didn't really know anything about what this area, where the Minnesota and Mississippi rivers meet, meant to our people as a whole. Back in '98, I was called by my cousin about this old woman, Carol Kratz. He said she was just like Pearl, a woman who was in our life as kids. He said, "You gotta meet her, we gotta save her house, and this water that's there." I said, "What are you talking about?" He said, "Well, MNDoT's gonna put a road through." I said, "Well, we ain't gonna stop them, those assholes do anything they wanna do." He said, "You gotta see it."

So after the Sundance we went over there, and I met Carol Kratz, and I met this water, this spring, and I saw the Four Oak Trees that are planted in the four directions, and I knew right away what he was talking about, that we had to fight to protect it.

The first day we were there was the day after Sundance in '98. I brought my Chanupa to those trees, and I heard the chanting of our relatives from way back. I looked around at everyone else, but they didn't hear it. A couple of days later, Michael and I were on the river bank. We were looking over the edge, and I had never been there, so when I looked over it was really high. I said, "Man," and then I heard the chanting again. I looked over at Michael and he goes, "I heard it!" I just smiled. Then we heard it again, and we both had goose bumps, just like I'm getting right now just talking about it.

So then I knew we had to and try to protect that. At that time we started to get ahold of our elders to try and find out what we were doing there. Harry Charger came, he's our Sundance Chief. Chris Leith called him, Chris is the one who told us about it. He heard from Clyde Bellecourt, who heard from Bob Greenberg, that the place was sacred. The people who should know about it didn't, because our people were assimilated, but Chris Leith knew something about it, and told us to go there. We had to go there to protect it. So we put up our tipis, and we joined Earth First!, and all of our friends from the neighborhood. It was beautiful, I've never experienced anything like that, where all these people would come together ... But in our way, we believe that the four colors of man have to come together to save the earth, so that was part of the prophecy being fulfilled, all these people coming together to try and protect the trees and the water.

Bear

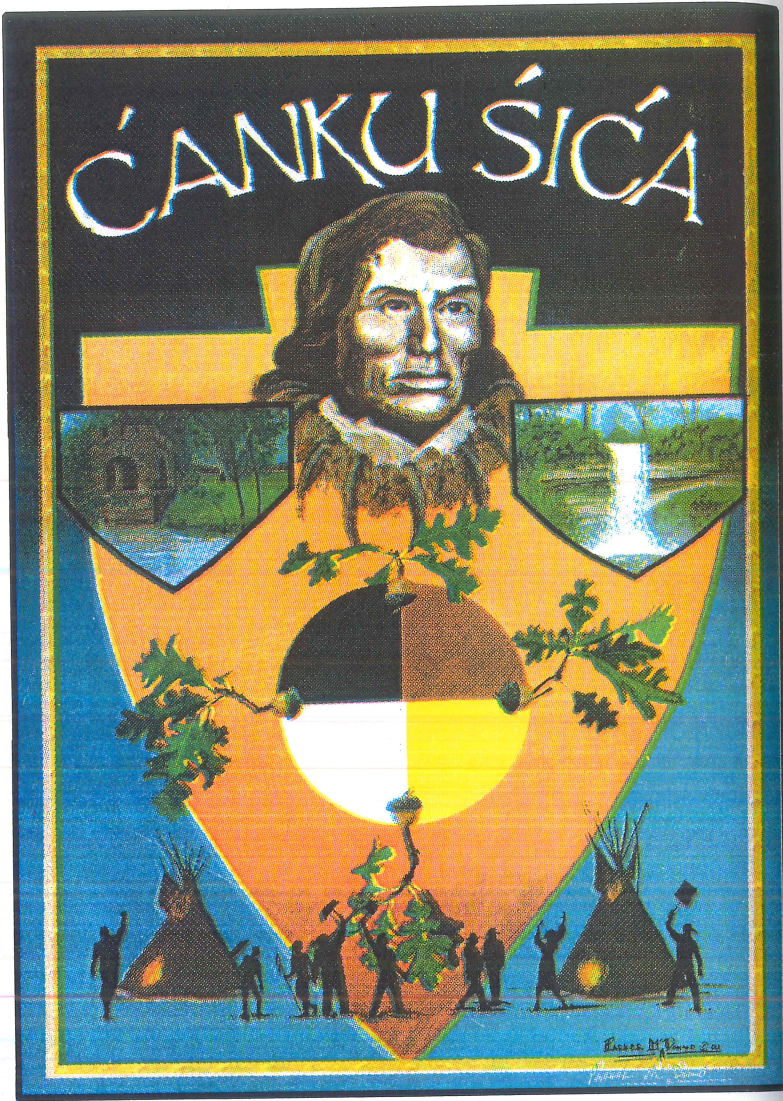
My name's Ron, Bear, or else Ogiimaa Wiigaabo, that's Standing Chief. I first went down to camp August 11th, 1998, from the Sundance. That's where I met Jim, and Michael, at the Sundance. Me and Zac were dancing, and Chris said that when we got done there, they needed help up in Minneapolis, that Earth First! was camped out there and needed support.

So me and Zac went over there and met Jim and Marshall. I knew Marshall from four or five years back, he had helped us at a lot of different protests. They gave us a tour around the camp. I met Tumbleweed, and he told me how they were doing security, and I told him I could help him set it up. He showed me where the office was and I showed him how to set up security. I told him we had to do it all day long, told him what to watch for, how to talk on the radios and the CB.

So the third day we were down there I talked to Jim and a couple other Native Americans and I said, "The first thing you do when you have an encampment, the way we protect it, is you have a Sacred Fire." Jim said, "Yeah, you're right," so me and Zac started a Sacred Fire a little ways from Carol's house. Then they came and said it was too close to the house, so we started another one closer to the road. We had a meeting that night to explain to Earth First! what a Sacred Fire was about, how we respect it. A lot of the activists there agreed to it.

So I told Jim, we just came from the Sundance, what we should do was try and build a sweat lodge. He said, "You're right," so we went down and talked to Chris and told him we wanted to build a sweat lodge, and he said go ahead. So we went down and built our first sweat lodge. Then we got all the people together from camp, told them, "Let's go and have a sweat." I was running the sweats for a while down there.

So after a while we had the camp going pretty good there, had security, people going in and out, the Sacred Fire. I met the ladies that were holed up in the first house. The first thing I did was give them sage. They saged themselves down and said thank you. The camp was going pretty good for a while. They used to come by and harass us, the FBI came by and took pictures of all our cars. After a while I told people, "Forget about it, don't even worry about it. They're gonna know we're here."



Full print of cover artwork: The man depicted at the top of the painting is Little Crow (1810-1863). He was chief of the Mendota Dakota in the village of Kaposia, (located in what is now St. Paul), during the times of relocation, starvation and uprising in the early 1860s. "Canku Sica" means "bad road" in the Dakota language.

CHAPTER THREE

The Mdote Mdewakanton Dakota Oyate

"We had said, all along, that if we could just get the Indians involved we might have a chance at stopping this highway. In the 43 years I lived on Riverview Road I felt a connection with the Native Americans, but did not know why."

-Carol Kratz

The Story of My People

By Jim Anderson, Cultural Chairman,
Mendota Mdewakanton Dakota Community

Mdote, or Mendota, means where the rivers meet; it's the place of the Dakota creation story. We believe the Great Spirit placed the Dakota on Big Island, now known as Pike Island. We don't know if there was ever a large village right in Mendota, but we do know that there were always Dakota living there and that it was a sacred area. This is what our elders tell us, and the first French explorers also documented this when they came in 1654.

This place where the Rivers meet is also along a trading route that extends from the Gulf of Mexico to Hudson Bay. It is well known that this ancient trading route has been used for thousands of years by the indigenous people of the region.

Mendota is where the Dakota have always been. First, the French came to trap furs and trade with the local people. Then they married Dakota women so they could get companionship and help in their business. It also gave them relationships with the people. They lived this way a long time until the British made the Louisiana Purchase.

In 1805, Zebulon Pike came with orders to secure the land for a fort west of the Mississippi. He met on Big Island with Seven Dakota chiefs. He had with him 50 gallons of whiskey and 200 dollars worth of trading blankets and other trading items. After he gave them the whiskey and other goods, he attempted to negotiate a treaty. Only two chiefs signed it, but it gave the U.S. Government the rights to a circle from Mendota nine miles in any direction.

Things were never the same for the Dakota in Mendota.

In 1818 the U.S. Government came to build Fort Snelling. They told the Dakota that they were building the fort to keep the settlers from coming onto Dakota land. Different treaties were signed with our people, but the treaty of 1851 signed in Mendota gave away all the land except ten miles on either side of the Minnesota River. That was to be the reservation for all Dakota.

But in 1862, after ten years of the traders stealing and cheating the Dakota of the money they were supposed to get from the government for their land, there was an uprising. That year, the money was late coming and the traders would give no more credit to our relatives. One trader in Morton, Minnesota told our people to eat grass when our children and elders were starving. The next day they found his warehouse empty, his throat cut, and his mouth full of grass. That was the beginning of the 1862 conflict between the Dakota and the new inhabitants, which was almost a year of violence from both sides. After most of the warriors left the state, the rest of the Dakota - mostly women, children, and elders - were rounded up and put into a concentration camp under Fort Snelling.

38 Dakota were hanged, by presidential order, in association with the uprising, on December 26, 1862.

In the spring, those that hadn't frozen or starved to death were shipped by barge to Crow Creek and then to Santee, Nebraska. However, over 100 of our relatives were permitted to stay in Minnesota because they were "friendlies." Some of them had helped save over 300 settler women and children held captive during the conflict. Others had been rounded up after the conflict, even though they lived in Mendota and surrounding areas and had not been involved.

Henry Sibley set aside 10 acres for our relatives on the bluff behind Mendota. The horseshoe road to Lake Agusta is called Sibley's Indian Homes. Some were the families of Indians who were government scouts, others were farmers and half-breeds who lived by making moccasins, bead work, and other things to survive. White people use to come and picnic nearby to see some real Indians living in tipis.

In 1863, an act of congress promised the friendly Dakota money and land for what they had done to help save the lives of the white settlers, but no money or lands were ever given to them. Sibley wrote to Washington many times requesting what was owed to the Mendota Dakota Oyate, the Friendlies, but he was never successful in getting what was due to our relatives.

In the late 1880s, some of the other Dakota started coming back to Minnesota and the government bought land for them in Morton, Prior Lake, and Prairie Island, but said land was too expensive around Mendota. If any Dakota wanted to, they could move to one of the other parcels of land secured for them.

But our relatives knew how important Bdote was to our heritage, so they stayed after Sibley's death in 1891. Eventually, they were forced off Sibley's ten acres, so they moved to the river bottoms right below Mendota, where they lived in tipis and shacks. They were called squatters on their own land by the people who had driven them off, but our relatives didn't leave.

They lived there, flood after flood, until 1950, when a very large flood took all of the houses and shacks and washed them away. Our relatives were told they couldn't rebuild anymore. The government turned that area into Fort Snelling State Park. Some of our relatives still live in the Horseshoe in Mendota, but most moved to Minneapolis or Saint Paul.

40 years later, our relatives started getting back together, forming the Mendota Mdewakanton Dakota Community, which is our non-profit group that now works to protect culture, language, and heritage. We have over 280 adult members, and most of them still live within 30 miles of Mendota. We have been teaching language, and having powwows and ceremonies to help our relatives know who they are: the Mendota Mdewakanton Dakota Oyate.

Article VI, U. S. Constitution, "Treaties made with Indian Nations shall be the supreme law of the land."

TREATY WITH THE SIOUX, Sept. 23, 1805.

Whereas, a conference held between the United States of America and the Sioux Nation of Indians, Lieut. Z. M. Pike, of the Army of the United States, and the chiefs and warriors of the said tribe, have agreed to the following articles, which when ratified and approved of by the proper authority, shall be binding on both parties:

ARTICLE 1.

That the Sioux Nation grants unto the United States for the purpose of the establishment of military posts, nine miles square at the mouth of the river St. Croix, also from below the confluence of the Mississippi and St. Peters, up the Mississippi, to include the falls of St. Anthony, extending nine miles on each side of the river. That the Sioux Nation grants to the United States, the full sovereignty and power over said districts forever, without any let or hindrance whatsoever.

ARTICLE 2.

That in consideration of the above grants the United States shall, prior to taking possession thereof, pay to the Sioux two thousand dollars, or deliver the value therof in such goods and merchandise as they shall choose.

ARTICLE 3.

The United States promise on their part to permit the Sioux to pass, repass, hunt or make other uses of the said districts, as they have formerly done, without any other exception, but those specified in article first.

In testimony hereof, we, the undersigned, have hereunto set our hands and seals, at the mouth of the river St. Peters, on the 23rd day of September, one thousand eight hundred and five.

Z. M. Pike, First Lieutenant and Agent at the above conference.
[SEAL.]
Le Petit Carbeau, his x mark. [SEAL.]
Way Aga Enogee, his x mark. [SEAL.]

TREATY OF FORT LARAMIE, Sept. 17, 1851

Articles of a treaty made and concluded at Fort Laramie, in the Indian

Territory, between D. D. Mitchell, superintendent of Indian affairs, and Thomas Fitzpatrick, Indian agent, commissioners specially appointed and authorized by the President of the United States, of the first part, and the chiefs, headmen, and braves of the following Indian nations, residing south of the Missouri River, east of the Rocky Mountains, and north of the lines of Texas and New Mexico, viz, the Sioux or Dahcotahs, Cheyennes, Arapahos, Crows, Assinaboines, Gros-Ventre Mandans, and Arikaras.

ARTICLE 1. The aforesaid nations, parties to this treaty, having assembled for the purpose of establishing and confirming peaceful relations amongst themselves, do hereby covenant and agree to abstain in future from all hostilities whatever against each other, to maintain good faith and friendship in all their mutual intercourse, and to make an effective and lasting peace.

ARTICLE 2. The aforesaid nations do hereby recognize the right of the United States Government to establish roads, military and other posts, within their respective territories.

ARTICLE 3. In consideration of the rights and privileges acknowledged in the preceding article, the United States bind themselves to protect the aforesaid Indian nations against the commission of all depredations by the people of the said United States, after the ratification of this treaty.

ARTICLE 4. The aforesaid Indian nations do hereby agree and bind themselves to make restitution or satisfaction for any wrongs committed, after the ratification of this treaty, by any band or individual of their people, on the people of the United States, whilst lawfully residing in or passing through their respective territories.

ARTICLE 5. The aforesaid Indian nations do hereby recognize and acknowledge the following tracts of country, included within the metes and boundaries hereinafter designated, as their respective territories, viz;

The territory of the Sioux or Dahcotah Nation, commencing the mouth of the White Earth River, on the Missouri River; thence in a southwesterly direction to the forks of the Platte River; thence up the north fork of the Platte River to a point known as the Red Buts, or where the road leaves the river; thence along the range of mountains known as the Black Hills, to the head-waters of Heart River; thence down Heart River to its mouth; and thence down the Missouri River to the place of beginning. ***Territories of other nations not listed to conserve space***

ARTICLE 6. The parties to the second part of this treaty having selected principals or head-chiefs for their respective nations, through whom all national business will hereafter be conducted, do hereby bind themselves to sustain said chiefs and their successors during good behavior.

ARTICLE 7. In consideration of the treaty stipulations, and for the damages which have or may occur by reason thereof to the Indian nations, parties hereto, and for their maintenance and the improvement of their moral and social customs, the United States bind themselves to deliver to the said Indian nations the sum of fifty thousand dollars per annum for the term of ten years, with the right to continue the same at the discretion of the President of the United States for a period not exceeding five years thereafter, in provisions merchandise, domestic animals, and agricultural implements, in such proportions as may be deemed best adapted to their condition by the President of the United States, to be distributed in proportion to the population of the aforesaid Indian nations.

ARTICLE 8. It is understood and agreed that should any of the Indian nations, parties to this treaty, violate any of the provisions thereof, the United States may withhold the whole or a portion of the annuities mentioned in the preceding article from the nation so offending, until, in the opinion of the President of the United States, proper satisfaction shall have been made.

In testimony whereof the said D. D. Mitchell and Thomas Fitzpatrick commissioners as aforesaid, and the chiefs, headmen, and braves, parties hereto, have set their hands and affixed their marks, on the day and at the place first above written.
D. D. Mitchell and Thomas Fitzpatrick, Commissioners.
Nakota/DaNakota/Dakota/Lakota:
Mah-toe-wha-you-whey, his x mark,
Mah-kah-toe-zah-zah, his x mark,
Bel-o-ton-kah-tan-ga, his x mark,
Nah-ka-pah-gi-gi, his x mark,

Mak-toe-sah-bi-chis, his x mark,
Meh-wha-tah-ni-hans-kah, his x mark

THIRTY SEVENTH CONGRESS. Sess. III Ch. 37. 1863

An Act for the Relief of Persons for Damages sustained by Reason of Depredations and Injuries by certain Bands of Sioux Indians

February 16, 1863

Whereas the United States heretofore became bound by treaty stipulations to the Sisseton, Wahpaton, Mdewakanton, and Wapakoota bands of the Dakota or Sioux Indians to pay large sums of money and annuities, the greater portion of which remains unpaid according to the terms of said treaty stipulations; and whereas during the past year the aforesaid bands of Indians made an unprovoked, aggressive and most savage war upon the United States, and massacred a large number of men, women and children within the State of Minnesota, and destroyed and damaged a large amount of property, and thereby have forfeited all just claim to the said monies and annuities to the United States; and whereas it is just and equitable that the persons whose property has been destroyed or damaged by the said Indians, or destroyed or damaged by the troops of the United States in said war, should be indemnified in whole or in part out of the indebtedness and annuities so forfeited as aforesaid: Therefore-

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That all treaties heretofore made and entered into by the Sisseton, Wahpaton, Mdewakanton, and Wapakoota bands of Sioux or Dakota Indians, or any of them, with the United States, are hereby declared to be abrogated and annulled, so far as said treaties or any of them purport to impose any future obligation on the United States, and all lands and rights of occupancy within the State of Minnesota, and all annuities and claims heretofore accorded to said Indians, or any of them, to be forfeited to the United States.

SECTION 9. *And be it further enacted,* That the Secretary of the Interior is hereby authorized to set apart of the public lands, not otherwise appropriated, eighty acres in severalty to each individual of the aforenamed bands who exerted himself in rescuing the whites from the late massacre of said Indians. The land so set apart shall not be subject to any tax, forfeiture, or sale, by process of law, and shall not be aliened or devised, except by the consent of the President of the United States, but shall be an inheritance to said Indians and their heirs forever.

Kurt Seaburg

Excerpted from a letter that the author read before the judge upon being tried for trespassing in conjunction with the encampment.

One hundred and ninety five years ago a historic meeting took place between representatives of the United States government and the Dakota/Sioux nation at the confluence of the Minnesota and Mississippi rivers. The United States, at that time, was interested in building a military post at a strategic location and needed the cooperation of Natives in the area. The Dakota people were interested in preserving their way of life. The Dakota had seen, in previous contacts with the Europeans, that these lighter-skinned people lived and behaved differently from themselves. They had a different attitude towards the land. They were driven by profit, and had a nasty habit of breaking their promises. Perhaps, the Dakota might have reasoned, by signing a treaty with those who seemed to have some control over the encroaching Europeans, and sealing it with a pipe ceremony, they might get some solid assurances that their way of life would not be threatened by the arrival of this new nation of people.

The treaty of 1805, in my mind, clearly holds out a promise to the descendants of the Dakota people that the integrity of the land they had always lived on would be protected in such a way as to insure that the way of life that they had always known would also be protected for all time. Article 3 clearly assured that no matter what happened, no matter what historical developments took place, they would always have access to the land.

Your honor, it makes no sense to me to promise a people and their descendants access to a piece of land, for subsistence and spiritual purposes, then allow others to destroy that piece of land, making access to it impossible. MNDoT claims it had a "right" to destroy that land, to make way for a highway, and that I and my fellow co-defendants were blocking this right-of-way. I believe that as a guest of the Dakota people, invited to participate in a sacred ceremony, an activity guaranteed by the treaty of 1805 and upheld by Article 6 of the U.S. constitution, I had a right to be there, and MNDoT had no right to forcibly remove me and desecrate a sacred site.

Linda Brown

We were going to a powwow over at Prairie Island; Bob, Bev, Michael Scott and myself. We just stopped at Carol's house, and told who we were, and she was just excited. She called Mary Jo, who came over and gave us the tour.

Then we went to the powwow, and then the Sundance. Before we left, Mary Jo had told us that she would call us and let us know if the camp was going to be raided.

So we got back late on Sunday, and Monday morning at about 7:00 we got a phone call. This was in August, like the first day. So we're driving over there and I'm thinking, "Oh, boy, we're going to get arrested!" We're grandparents, you know, I had never been involved in anything like this. When we got over there, it was real calm. People were locked down, and we just sat around and talked to different people.

Then we went home that night, and it seems like we were there just about every night after that. It was really incredible to me, people would just drive by and drop off clothes and food. Then it just kind of grew from there. It was amazing, all the different people that came, from all walks of life and all different beliefs.

Where were we indeed...

Our fearless governor [Jesse Ventura], we were really kind of hoping he would get elected, because we thought he might understand. His comment was, "Where were you thirty years ago?" Well, the sad thing is, people don't know that until 1978 it was illegal for Native Americans to have any kind of ceremonies, or speak their language, or anything. That fact is not known. It just blows people away when they hear it. Indians weren't citizens until 1934. Land of the free, uh-huh! I've learned a lot, and it's pretty depressing, actually.

One of the things that really bothered me was that we did not listen to our elders. Even way back when the houses were still standing, some people went down to see Chris Leith. They smoked a pipe with him, and he said, "The ceremonies have been done, the spirits are there, you don't need to be there anymore." That's a big reason why not a lot of Native

Americans would come over to the camp at the trees.

Plus I had heard that some of our community members had gone over, to bring food or clothing, and they were not greeted warmly, or not at all, so they did not go back. So that was kind of bad.

We did get an anonymous donation that allowed us to get supplies, so we were involved in that way, but we didn't think people should be there, and part of it was the way things were going around the trees. We're saying this is a sacred place, but the way people are sitting around and not always using the nicest language, and I don't know how many relationships got started there, but I know they did, and that wasn't the way it should have been treated.

But we didn't know! We had never done anything like this before. You can't really go back and say, "We should have done this or that." I think if we got in that situation again, we might do it differently, but the fact that we were there from August 98 through December 99, it's pretty incredible how long we were there.

Another thing I thought was sad was the way the press covered it all, because all they ever covered were the bad things that happened. When Orville Lookinghorse came, on the unity ride, there was one small piece in the St. Paul paper. How many times do you see horses riding across the Mendota bridge? It's not just an everyday occurrence.

Another thing that was kind of funny, is the people were really happy that the Native Americans were finally there, but some of them got really nervous when we brought the drum down. A lot of people think of the drum as war, but it really is a prayer. Also they were concerned about the noise, that the neighbors would call, and the police would come. They were always really careful to quit drumming by 10:00. It was like, "Make up your mind! Either you want us or you don't, because this is part of what we're about ..." Hopefully some people got educated about that too.

Even for the Mendota, it was a real learning experience, bringing back our culture ... Unfortunately not a lot of our community members got involved, but a lot of them are older, and were denied the fact of who they are, and it's really hard to bring that back. We're working on it...

Rediscovering a lost identity...

We started doing research. "If you prick your finger and bleed, your Indian blood will be gone. You were French." That's what everybody was told because of how their parents were treated.

So we started in '94, gathering information, and some of the cousins started coming up with information that no one really knew about. They applied to get in out at Shakopee. We did a lot of research, got a lot of documentation, and they were denied membership. The enrollment officer out there told us to start our own community.

So we started meeting, in March of '96. To begin with it was 12 of us at our kitchen table. We got the regulations from the Department of the Interior, and being naive at the time, and knowing in our heart that we were doing the right thing, we thought, "We'll have this done no problem." We started meeting and said, "Tell your relatives. Tell people that you know have some Dakota to come." It grew from there, and we started getting information together to send to the Department of the Interior.

In May of '97 we got non-profit status, and so we're able to get grants to help us through.

In June of '97, we sent 280 applications and a big box of documents, birth and death and marriage certificates, out to Washington. We got a response in December, 13 pages, and it said, "You need to do this and this and this ..."

We had an attorney in here, she said that if the four [existing Dakota] communities had to go through the process that we do, they would not have gotten recognition. They changed the regulations in the '80s. How many people have to prove what degree their blood is?! A quarter or a half ... Chris Leith has been really supportive. The first thing he said was that we should sue the government, "You should sue 'em, you don't need to go through the whole process in order to be federally recognized."

Bob Brown

My name is Bob Brown. I'm 60 years old, I live in Mendota Heights with my wife and son, and I'm currently the chairman of the Mendota Mdewakanton Dakota Community. I had never before, nor had Linda, done any activism at all, that isn't the reason that we were there. We were there because elders told us it was a place that meant a whole lot to our ancestors, and we were told that the area was kind of self-protecting through the years, and that we were lucky that it hadn't been developed.

Our occupation was set up to protect that area from development. We would have been there if they had tried to put up a restaurant or something, it wasn't particularly the road. We continued to support the occupation as long as it lasted.

I didn't agree with the way that a lot of things got done, but it was a coalition, and we were grateful for the help we got from the coalition. There were a lot of difficult parts to it; I didn't care for the sabotaging of private equipment, when that happened. In fact when it did happen, I wrote a letter to the chief engineer of C.S. McCrossan, telling him that my people had no part in it, and we didn't condone that kind of stuff because we considered it violent.

Early in the occupation, at Camp Two Pines, the kids (I refer to them as kids) had daily circles where they discussed what was going on. One night, the girls were upset because the guys were able to go with bare tops, and of course there's laws that say that girls can't do that. It was getting to kind of a heated argument, and here comes Jimmy, with all of his big body and he's got the smudge pot, and he doesn't have a shirt on. It was funny to me, because people there were very serious about that issue, and here comes Jimmy without a shirt on, and he just kind of wades through and smudges everybody. He didn't even know what they were talking about. That really struck me at that time.

Lots of special times. One time Thunder took us to this spot on the bluff. I think it was probably in the area where they used to quarry the limestone, and it was kind of an outcropping. He asked me to bring my pipe. It was kind of a neat time, really quiet, down there on the river.

Another time we were over there by where the early settlers had their homes. You know those vines that get kind of heavy ... this one had a spiral of like eight spirals. I commented to Thunder when we went by, and he must have went and put some tobacco down cause he cut it and brought it to me. I still have it. It was really neat.

Mike Scott

My name is Michael Scott. Me and Jim Anderson cultural co-chair the Mendota Dakota people.

As far as I can remember, Bob Greenberg was looking for natives. Somebody told him to call Chris, who called Uncle Bob, and told him the predicament down there, about the trees and the water. Then Bob called me and asked if I wanted to go down to Carol's and check it out. I said sure, so me and my mom, Uncle Bob and Bob Alby, just us four went down there, the first time that anybody had met Carol.

We went down there and talked to her. She wasn't telling us anything Native, she just said, "I've been in my house for 42 years, and the road's going to go right through here ..."

Then Mary Joe came by, and said, "Oh cool, you guys are the Natives from around here. I need to take you guys on a little tour." She knew more of the Native outlook on it. So we went to the trees. She didn't tell us too much about them, just what she had heard. At this time, I knew about the four directions, but I didn't really know all about it. Then she took us down a back way to Camp Coldwater, and all the way down to Hidden Falls. She was just telling us what she knew, which wasn't much, knowing what I know now, but she was our push, to get us to go down there.

We walked the old Indian trails to get back up, went back to Carol's. I remember telling Carol before we left, "We will be back."

The very next day, I called Jimmy and said, "Red Sky, did Uncle Bob call you and tell you about down by ..." We were calling it Minnehaha Park at that time. "There's a lady down there, MNDoT's going to run a road right through her house. You have to go down here and meet this lady." There's an old lady that Carol reminds me of, from when Jimmy and me were five or six. Her name was Pearl. I said, "You gotta go down there. She's just like Pearl. We have to stop MNDoT." Jimmy said, "You can't stop MNDoT, they do what they want, when they want, where they want."

So we went down there and went over everything again, with Carol, go down to the trees and all the way down. Then Jimmy says, "I'm going to walk this spring, all the way up." He was climbing up the water, I think I got a little video ...

We got almost up to the bike trail and he stopped and looked down, because his foot was caught on something in the water. He pulled his foot up, and that's where he got that big bone that he has, in Coldwater Springs.

Then we went back. That must have been two or three weeks before the Sundance. We got back from Sundance at about midnight on a Sunday. Monday morning, Red Sky (Jimmy) came up to the deck up here, must have been seven o' clock in the morning. He says, "Tanshee! Michael! Get up, we gotta go!" Tapping on my god damn window... I was sleeping, said, "We gotta go where?" He said, "To Minnehaha Park."

I said, "What?! What are you talking about?" He says, "We're gonna go set up a tipi there in Carol's yard." So 7:45 in the morning on August 10th, we set up my little tipi in her yard.

The third time me and Jimmy went down, Mary Jo was there. She said, "I need to show you guys something." So we take off. She takes us down these Indian trails right on the bluff. There was a rock overhang. Jim walks out and looks down and says, "Whoa!" It's like a 300 foot drop. He says, "Michael come here, look it." So as I'm walking over there, as he's looking at me, he looks all surprised and says, "Did you hear that?" I said, "What? I didn't hear shit." I get over there and look down and said, "Whoa! I'd hate to fall from here." Then we both stood up from looking down, and then I heard the chanting. He heard it at the same time again. I said, "Now I heard that." He said, "Yeah, that's what I heard the first time. Mary Jo is about four or five feet away from us, and she's like, "Hear what, what are you guys talking about?" Basically after that, whatever Mary Jo had planned for us just dissipated, and Jimmy said, "We gotta get back to camp." I don't know if she ever even showed us what she wanted to!

So to me that was the spirits letting us know that they're there. To me, after that happened, I was at camp, at my tipi, all over the place, but I had like a sphere around me. I wouldn't let nothing else come in.

About a month into it, I had a little twelve-by-eight foot stage down there, and I'd play music. Most of the music was Native drum groups and stuff. Maybe two days a week we'd have open mic, maybe four hours of people up there just singing, drumming, doing their own stuff. I got a bunch of video of it.

There was another time right at the beginning of the occupation. Jimmy had a little staff. It was red willow. He had it all carved out, it was really nice. Some new people came down to camp. Jimmy liked to take the new people around, because he knew more, take them down to the trees and the spring … But he had to leave, so he says, "Tanshee, will you take these people around? Here, take this staff." He hands me that staff.

So I go down to the trees, and I was telling people [about them]. By this time I had talked to Chris, and I got more of our outlook on it. I was telling them about the four directions of the trees, why they were here, that they were burial scaffolds, what a burial scaffold was … So when I was telling them about the trees, I said, "This is the east tree," and I touched the tree with the staff. The biggest, brightest light, like somebody was taking pictures, went, blash, blash, blash! This had never happened to me before. I didn't say anything, like, "Did you guys see that?" because they didn't, 'cause they would have said something. I always check myself, so I touched the tree again. Flash! Flash! Flash! OK now! So I'm still trying to talk, and comprehend all these flashes and shit. Each tree that I touched with that staff, I had the brightest flashes. I didn't say anything.

I remember getting back, and I said to Red Sky (Jimmy), "Here's your staff, and there's something going on with your staff, and you can hold it." I told him what happened the next day. So that held me down there too.

NATIVE AMERICANS' RELATIONSHIP TO CAMP COLDWATER

By Dave Fudally

1. Artifacts from pre-1800s located at Camp Coldwater:

A. Stone ax found in 1997 by 2 boys, at Camp Coldwater steam boat landing area. The boys notified the archeologist, who told them this was an Indian village site and to keep the ax.
B. Arrowhead tip from Louis Massey site
C. Copper artifact at Coldwater Falls south trail.
D. Bones and pottery pieces, given to Bob Clouse.
F. Bone found at Camp Coldwater above stone ax site in September 1997.
E. Stone ax found in 1987.

Artifacts B-E were shown and/or given to Dave Radford. There have been no reports done on any of the artifacts.

2. Sacred Ground - Dwelling Place of Gods

Found by Paul Durand west of Camp Coldwater. See Morgan's Bluff, listed on several 1840s maps in Fort Snelling map folders at Minnesota Historical Society. Burial Grounds, see Paul Durand's book.

3.Giant Indian bones

Found during construction of Fort Snelling. The giant Indian skeleton was found where the commandant's house is built on the bluff, see Snelling Reports, early 1820s.

4. August 1836, Dakota attacked Ojibway by Peter Quinn's home at Camp Coldwater. One killed on each side. Peter Quinn was formerly an agent at Leech Lake Reservation.

5. 1841 Ojibway attack Camp Coldwater and killed the Dakota Chief Okahboka and his son.

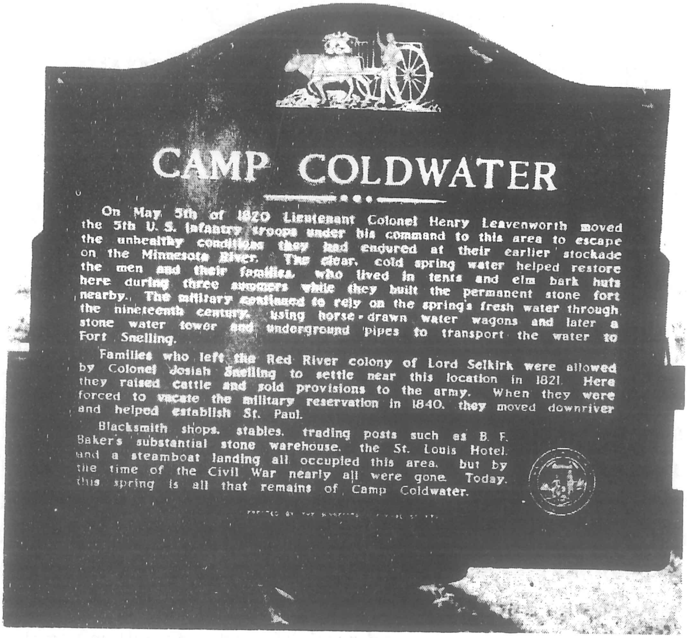
6. 1837 Ojibway stay at Camp Coldwater while signing 1837 treaty.

7. 1839, because of Ojibway murder by Dakota in 1836 at Camp Coldwater, two Ojibway kill Dakota at Lake Harriet causing major battles. Dakota later were removed from Lake Harriet villages to villages closer to the fort.

8. May 1840, Samuel and Gideon Pond, Indian missionaries, are removed from the Indian Lake Calhoun Mission to Baker's Trading Post at Camp Coldwater. The Indians would have to visit Camp Coldwater to see the Ponds. The Ponds live at Camp Coldwater until 1844, when they moved to Bloomington Indian Mission.

9. Peter Quinn was an Indian interpreter for both Dakota and Ojibway. Quinn lived at Camp Coldwater from 1823-1844 when he moved to Bloomington with Ponds. In 1844 he became Indian agent for Dakota. He was an Indian agent for Ojibway at Leech Lake.

15. Camp Coldwater was the beginning of the end for Indian life. As the Indians acquired trade articles from the new arrivals, their camp life and routines were changed. Their religious habits changed because of the missionaries. Their village sites moved to the missionary sites. They had to learn new languages. Traders supplied Indians with more guns, traps, clothing, kettles, and whiskey. Indians hired on as trail guides.



CAMP COLDWATER

On May 5th of 1820 Lieutenant Colonel Henry Leavenworth moved the 5th U. S. Infantry troops under his command to this area to escape the unhealthy conditions they had endured at their earlier stockade on the Minnesota River. The clear, cold spring water helped restore the men and their families, who lived in tents and elm bark huts here during three summers while they built the permanent stone fort nearby. The military continued to rely on the spring's fresh water through the nineteenth century, using horse-drawn water wagons and later a stone water tower and underground pipes to transport the water to Fort Snelling.

Families who left the Red River colony of Lord Selkirk were allowed by Colonel Josiah Snelling to settle near this location in 1821. Here they raised cattle and sold provisions to the army. When they were forced to vacate the military reservation in 1840, they moved downriver and helped establish St. Paul.

Blacksmith shops, stables, trading posts such as B. F. Baker's substantial stone warehouse, the St. Louis Hotel, and a steamboat landing all occupied this area, but by the time of the Civil War nearly all were gone. Today, this spring is all that remains of Camp Coldwater.

CHAPTER FOUR

"The First Camp": The Encampment on Riverview Road

"Time went by and the police didn't come, except in pairs, and all they did was inform us that we were "evicted" and had to leave or face arrest. No kidding."

-Sam Adams

Ben Tsai

This is the interview with Benjamin. The first night preparation for the Free State: we established a date that we had to go in, had several meetings, the site had been prepped. We met at the Seward Café at 2 a.m., an unauthorized use of the premises. (Laughs) We all had our assigned roles, and mine was to be a lookout on the north side, so I stationed myself by the corner of the North House, and proceeded to get completely eaten by mosquitoes for the next two or three hours.

But it was nice, we set up and everything went really smooth. Morning arrived. We were pretty ready to get kicked out pretty fast, or at least to receive some hostile cop action. We were sitting around, hanging out, waiting to be the intermediaries in case the cops showed up, had all our signs, a very colorful presence not easily ignored. I remember being really amazed at how relaxing the morning was turning out. Finally one lone police car rolled down the street. I could tell they were a bit confused. They jerked to a stop at the tripod for a few seconds, then kept going.

We were still ready to be raided at any point, everyone stayed up for 48 to 72 hours, just to be ready. So the first, second and third day were pretty much just a bunch of sleep deprived people trying to figure out what the hell to do. It was exciting. We had meetings to discuss what to do if they didn't raid, for a week, or a month, started to look farther ahead. We really had only expected to be there for three days, maybe a week, because they had this deadline, they were supposed to have the houses knocked down on such a date.

I was pretty much just there, constantly, doing a lot of everything, security, kitchen. A bunch of us did have jobs. I was working at the University at the time. I took a bunch of days off, and then went back to work. It was a really crazy schedule, because I would work during the day, and do security at night. I did that for a month and a half.

At first we were very strict about having the houses be only lockdown sites, then slowly people moved in until they were all occupied. It was a gradual process. It was a time when we were trying everything, people making brainstorms and enacting them without a lot of process, trying to move fast.

"The hunger strike started."

Several days into it, it was obvious that people outside the Free State weren't taking it very seriously. The city was just ignoring it. So we decided to try and get the word out through a banner drop. We got a huge donation of sheets and proceeded to sew them together into a 90 foot wide by 12 foot tall sheet of fabric. We wrote something like, "City Council, You're Killing Our Friends. Hunger Strike Day X."

We dropped it off the parking garage that was to the east of the government center. Maybe a dozen people worked on it. We did a partial test run, it was too big to do a full run. It was so big that there was a fold that we didn't notice till it was dropped. You could still read it, but it kind of sucked. People were hanging below it. We actually got that banner back after they cut it down, and we hung it at the Free State for a few days. Four to six people got arrested. The one funny thing was that Mark Brown was there [and got arrested]. When he got out, he got his police report, and there's a category for demeanor, where they usually write "mad, angry and dirty." For him they wrote, "gentle."

The hunger strike lasted 27 days, until the elders advised the four fasting youth to break their strike, observing that the State did not have compassion, and would probably let the four youth die before they would ever respond to their concerns.

Carol Kratz

August 1998

Another day went by and MNDoT had not shown their ugly faces. But that day we were joined by the Mendota Dakota after their return from Pipestone. It was incredible. Tipis went up, staffs and sage, a Sacred Fire was started, tents sprung up everywhere. It seemed to me that nothing could stop us now. My extended family was growing every day, all of these cultures coming together as one, the love and respect for each other grew day by day. I felt so safe and loved by each and every one of these people.

While all this was going on around me I was living in my personal hell. My husband had Alzheimer's and emphysema and was very ill. My condemnation hearing was August 13th and I was afraid. MNDoT was still pushing me to get the papers signed but I had decided to go all the way- to go to that hearing and present my case. It was interesting that the State kept offering me more money if I would just sign.

I did not do well in court- I was told a week later that MNDoT needed my property. I had done all I could. Before I got the papers from court, I was being offered more money, with the threat that if I didn't accept and sign the papers, I could lose the offer and they would go back to their original offer. I really don't know how I kept my sanity at that time and doubt I would have if it had not been for my wonderful extended family all around me.

On August 21, 1998, I signed away our home on Riverview Road. My emotions were flying every which way. Sadness beyond control, anxiety about leaving this place that we loved so much. What would my husband do in a new place? Where did we even want to live, the fear of leaving all those beautiful people whose lives would be in jeopardy without my legal presence on the land. There was anger that I could not save my home and the park- so much anger, what would happen to all of the wild animals and birds without us there to protect them?

But I had to move on and find a house for us to live in and that was very hard. I knew I had to stay close to this house and finally did find a place about a half mile from Riverview Road. MNDoT wanted me out of my home on November 30th, 1998, but I refused to be out on that date and said I would move December 9th, which we did.

That day was such a blur and many more which followed. My husband did not know where he was or who he was from that day until he passed away. My thoughts were always with the encampment on Riverview Road and when the raid would occur. I wanted to be there every minute but could not because I could not leave my husband.

Sam Adams

December 22nd, 2002: At the time direct action against the highway reroute began, I was loosely affiliated with the Earth First! group in Minneapolis. I was also trying to get an IWW branch started in the Twin Cities at that time. The project has not been terribly successful. I wish that the same enthusiasm that makes young people chain themselves to trees could go into the labor struggle too. The reason regular working class people are wiling to go cut down 200 year old oaks is that they've got to keep the kids fed. Their unions aren't strong or radical enough to give them a choice.

When the direct action began, I agreed to sit in a tripod set up next to one of the houses on Riverview Road that was slated to be demolished. This tall metal structure was made up of three long pieces of pipe, with a little wooden board slung underneath it by ropes. I was attached to one of the sections by a bicycle U-lock around my neck. Anyone attempting to demolish the house without removing me first would risk killing me by breaking my neck. We thought the police were going to come at any moment and remove us all, so we were determined to be ready. I stayed in that tripod for days and days - they tell me I actually set a record for tripod-sitting in North America.

People helped rig up a tarp to protect me from the sun and rain. I had a tin whistle to play and people would come and play music with me. Jim Kellerman in particular was a great comfort during that time - he would come play the flute and sometimes read to those of us who were locked down. It can be lonely when you're up above everyone, locked into a stationary position, with no one to talk to.

When I spoke to people in interviews, I used the name "Joe Hill." This was a deliberate statement; I wanted to put Joe Hill's name in the press again, and I wanted to make a point about our right to take back what belongs to us. I believe true militant unions would never allow the earth to be destroyed in the manner we see today, or allow the city's oldest park to be torn up to provide a faster commute to the airport. Developments like that are a theft, from the urban working class, of one of the amenities that makes life bearable here, and we shouldn't stand for them.

What I find hard to describe is the feeling during each moment at the Free State that we were making history, that we were taking part in a project with extremely important consequences. After I started working again and couldn't be there full-time, I would still ride my bicycle down and spend the night there, just so that I could be on free soil as the guest of the Dakota. It was a respite from the struggle of the daily rat race, punching timecards and wasting hours on unimportant work. It was a place where we could simply sit around and be ourselves, not fight for our convictions so much as simply live for them.

Mostly we stayed put and got to know each other. I got to meet Carol Kratz and her husband, who impressed me with their courage and their long-term commitment to the place where they'd raised their children and hoped to live out their days. I met Jim Anderson, Bob Brown and others in the Mendota Mdewakanton Dakota community. The story of their reconnecting with their roots, and the reemergence of the Mendota as a proud indigenous community is really inspiring. It reminds me of the quest for my own Welsh roots which led me to study the language and begin learning the traditional music, which I'm still doing. The further we are from our roots, the more easily we can be dug up and moved along whenever some boss or landlord finds it convenient.

Eventually I had to get back to working a day job. That cut down considerably on the time I could spend at the Minnehaha Free State, as some of us had begun calling the "liberated" area where we lived. My obligations to the other people in the house where I was living and paying rent were beginning to press on me.

Sadly, the less time I spent at the Free State, the less welcome I felt when I came back. The camp reestablished itself in a new location closer to the Four Oaks, and I saw fewer and fewer familiar faces when I came to visit. I suppose if I'd been there to greet all the new folks when they arrived, they wouldn't have been unfamiliar, but there you are.

Doing their work for them

At some point there began to be a certain unhealthy paranoia about informers and spies, which unfortunately was encouraged by the mysterious disappearance of some communications gear and the presence of a few people who really were informers. One lesson that remains to be learned from the past is that an informer can really mess up a direct action campaign, but stupid blind knee jerk activist paranoia will mess it up far worse than any informer could ever do alone. I had friends, rather straight-looking friends, who visited the camp and were asked point-blank if they were cops. Rather ironic, when two of the known informers were people in the typical crusty-punk uniform of body piercings and dreadlocks.

This was an issue that could have been addressed calmly and rationally through trainings, basic analysis of infiltration techniques and a few minimal security measures, but instead we had a lot of posturing and outright meanness, which I think just split the direct-action people further away from those who supported the resistance but needed to work on it in other ways.

We fought

We fought the best we could, and many good things came of it. I'm still impressed by the connections that people have maintained as a result of that struggle. It was real community service for me and a lot of the people involved, who still live here and are ready to stand up again if their community is threatened. Some are still working together on issues like Green Party organizing, union work, starting up alternative community centers and keeping them going. Hopefully the State learned something and will think twice before taking on projects like this again.

Lately I've been in withdrawal from social activism, which is something I do every few years. I'm really intent at becoming able to say what I want to as a musician. Most of my music is from Ireland and Wales, but I've also gotten interested in Turkish and Arab music. Playing music from that part of the world is a political statement in itself; it shows you neither accept Islamic fundamentalism nor American imperialism. It's all about the freedom to demand better choices for ourselves, instead of accepting the choices that the high and mighty make for us. In my own way I'm still fighting for that.

Natalia

Hi, my name is Natalia. I'm originally from Washington D.C.; that's where I lived, on and off, for the first 18 years of my life. I started doing activist work when I was 14. I got involved with a group called Positive Force D.C. I considered myself an anarchist, and was generally a pretty crazy kid, ran around the country and got arrested a lot.

Positive Force worked on humanitarian social services type issues for the most part, like anti-war stuff, access to medical care for poor people and things like that. They had a very long tradition of putting on punk shows, were really caught up in the D.C. punk scene.

At the time I was into doing a particular type of protest, which there wasn't so much of in D.C., so I went to New Jersey, because I had friends there, and there were very concerted campaigns going on. I really hated New Jersey. I lived there for six weeks. Every week I went on a road trip somewhere else because I really hated New Jersey. One day I randomly decided that I wanted to go to Minneapolis. Minneapolis is about a 20-hour greyhound ride from New Jersey. I got on the bus, brought a book with me and did a lot of thinking. I was really wanting my life to change. I knew that I wanted to work on Earth First! stuff. I was thinking that I was going to move to the woods, but honestly, I don't know how excited I was about that, because I'm a city kind of girl and don't like the woods all that much. But I really wanted to work on environmental issues.

So I went to Minneapolis, not because of that, but because I wanted to visit people I had met before. I had never been there before. I heard a little about the encampment before moving [to Minneapolis] but hadn't paid a whole lot of attention to it. I thought, 'Oh, well, that's interesting', but it wasn't necessarily relevant to me. When I got to Minneapolis, people were telling me about this thing which was going on, which was the encampment. It had been going on for about a month and a half. I was really excited about hearing that.

So a friend and I went out on our bikes, to the Free State. She left that night and I didn't. I was originally coming to Minnesota for three days. That was in October of 1998. I'm still here! I was at the Free State for about five minutes. I took a look around and was like, 'This is amazing! This is it! This is where I need to be. This is where my heart is. This is what I need to be working on. And I'll stay here. I'm going to put everything I have into this because this is it.' So I stayed. I called my roommates a month and a half later and said, "I'm sorry. I don't know if you've realized this but I'm never coming back. And I don't really care what you do with my stuff." I stayed at the Free State from that point forward.

I already had some background in doing human rights work, and I was feeling really strongly about environmental activism at that point. So, the fact that there was something that was combining indigenous treaty rights with environmental activism … it came together, and the place was just beautiful. There was something so amazing about it, that everyone I ever met who went there, it touched them. The energy there was amazing.

I knew it wasn't perfect. My first day there, I went to a four hour-long consensus meeting where everyone was snapping at each other. I had been to consensus meetings before, it was nothing new to me, but it was what I wanted to do. So, I stayed.

For the first couple of weeks no one really talked to me, which I figured was about normal. They were obviously doing some pretty intense work that was not necessarily legal. I understood the general paranoia that was around. There was a lot of paranoia around at that point where people were not really telling other people what was going on. Not in a malicious way, just because they wanted to keep themselves safe. So nobody really talked to me. I went around and got to know the area, got the tour. [I was wondering], 'What can I do?' I did what I could do, which was, in the beginning, washing dishes and cooking and stuff like that, stuff that was really minor.

Eventually I got to know people. We all talked. I [became] trusted enough that I offered to do a lockdown position and people were into it. I was originally going to lockdown at the North House, the girl's house. Somebody was going away, so I sat in that house for five days. We were thinking that the cops were going to come.

I had some experience with being arrested before, and I had done lots of locking down and stuff like that. As I said we were kind of crazy kids, so it didn't faze me at all. At the same time, the knowledge that the police were going to come sometime was very prevalent. We were all desperately preparing for this police raid. We didn't know when it was going to come or what it was going to be like. Looking back on it we really had no idea.

At the same time there were lots of things going on. There were coffeehouses where there was music and art. We would have corn feeds. We had people from the community coming down all the time. There were ceremonies and all of these things going on. It was really open to other people. There were always tons of people around. It wasn't necessarily the people who were just living there; people would sleep there for a night, people would come through. It was really open and it was really exciting. It sounds really cheesy when I say it, but it was like a new way of community living. It was a new way of building consensus, of building relationships, of building a particular way to live, and of doing it in relation to the rest of town in a way that was not fucked up.

I was very conscious that I was part of something incredible. There were not times when I was there when I was [not thinking that]. I was very young, starry-eyed and committed. It was a great place to be and a great time to be there. At the same time, there was knowledge that at some time this was going to go. It was an interesting dynamic, like, "Live for the right this second because it will not necessarily be there tomorrow."

Jan Dalsin

My name is Jan, and I live in South Minneapolis. Minnehaha Park is the park that my family went to. I can remember going there when I was little and riding a pony ride near the depot. I remember later on, sort of my teen years, I have a picture of me sitting on the stone wall, over by the creek there, and I think, 'Interesting. This is my park.'

Age-wise, I qualify for the senior citizens discount at Baker's Square! 55 and up ... (laughs) To digress, my background is as an elementary teacher. I like kids, always have ... That's part of the delight in this work; it's not just one age or one background or one anything! It's a mixture of peoples. It's good, it's real, it's how nature and life works.

Back in September of 1998, Jane said, "Jan, we need you over here." I remember reading a little about people trying to protect houses, reading in the Highland Villager, but at the time I was accompanying a friend who was dying, and so I wasn't paying a lot of attention to what was going on around at the time. After my friend died, and several of us were getting together and processing what had happened and helping with acknowledgment and such, we got a call that reinforcements were needed over at the Free State, I suppose it was called. The group had been down at the Capitol, and they got word that there was a raid at the Free State, so instead of doing what we were going to do at my house, the group of us headed over to the Free State that day. That was my introduction to the Free State, responding to a call for help, "Come and help, there's a need for you to be here." That's how I got involved.

The fact that it was Native peoples protecting sacred sites, history and being, was part of why I would put my body on that line. The other was that it was the environment, trees and park land, natural environment in the middle of an urban setting … that we would not value that is just insanity! This is so important, that a stand has got to be taken! Who knows where it will lead, but …

Back in those years the authorities were trying to marginalize people who were part of the movement by saying it was young people, out of town people, trying to say that these people here "aren't us," that they're "different." So I came to say, "This is me and I'm here, and this is my park. It belongs to the people."

Mary was also bringing food and clothing, and she was another life support back then, so it was both supporting me in my life journey at that time, and becoming involved in other people's needs for help. This movement is not just an issue, not just an activist thing to do. It's a way of living and of being, with other people who are doing the same. This is the span of life that we have, this is our time for being responsible and responsive, and taking care of the gifts that have been given to us. This is our time.

So I remember getting a call from Joann, who had received a call from the Justice Office of the Sisters of St. Joseph, saying there's gonna be a prayer vigil at six o' clock Wednesday night. So I show up by myself over there at the Minnehaha Free State, looking for this prayer vigil! One other college student showed up, and Sky was there, he was on a hunger strike with three other people, and one other woman was there. So the four of us hiked from where the houses were through the woods to the Four Trees.

It was dusk time, and getting cool. We walked single file down the little trail. I had not been there, didn't know much about them, so I learned about these four special trees. The four of us sat in the center of them. Since I was the older one in the group, they had a metal folding chair I got to sit on, and the younger people sat on the ground. We sat in a circle, two of us from the supporting outside, and two who were living there at the Free State, and we were praying and sending up our energy, calling on the help of the creator and the spirits who were there to help save this land. The spirits helped those who were involved to have courage and speak the truth, and we have.

Why I tell that story is because being involved is a linked experience, one thing leading to another, so now when we go on full moon walks I remember the first time I was down at the trees.

I remember one time driving up Riverview Road, and what do I see but people in a circle dance. It was the middle of a fall afternoon, and people were dancing in a big circle! Full of life and fun, in the middle of everything going on ... For the people of El Salvador, to make their way through that bloody summer when everything was going on, we found they needed times of joy and lightheartedness, and living life to the full, because that's the only way you can go on ... it can't just be a heavy struggle where you're being beaten up and pushed down all the time.

Joe Hesla

I'd say I've been a social activist for about 15 years; I got awakened into social activism kinda late. I'm 46 now, so I would've been 31. Really done a lot of environmental activism over the years, but of course spanning into a lot of areas of "the movement," going to different kinds of rallies and demos and through different political campaigns. I'd say that the environment is my biggest love and my biggest fear, my biggest passion, it drives me; it can drive me out of my house to do something. And when I really found out about 55- I found out about it before the encampment, I remember going out to several civil disobedience trainings in June and July before the encampment started. But it definitely wasn't easy for me, coming out to camp those first two, three months of camp. I think people at camp, probably very understandably so, were not very outgoing. There were some friendly people, and then there were people who didn't really make a big effort. I didn't really know why that was; I think some of it might have been people worried about infiltrators.

So it was all new to me, and I could tell that it was something I really wanted to get involved with. So that fall, I started doing security shifts in that first camp where the seven houses were. I remember sleeping in that room in the second to farthest south house, a number of nights there, and I slept in the North House at least one time.

I wanted to save the trees; I thought it was so great that people were putting their lives on the line and I had to be part of it. I never camped at the camp like the long term people but I'd spend nights out there doing shifts or helping out that way, that was my involvement. I suppose I did a ton of phoning; I was in charge of the phone tree for a number of months and made probably between 500 and 1000 phone calls for trying to get different things passed in the park board.

Methane

My involvement began with a phone call from an old friend. The friend's involvement had begun two months before, but the struggle had been going on for 40 years, or perhaps since the colonists came, or more accurately, forever. It was a journey without preparations, without a staff and with as much money as I could scrounge up from the savings I keep in an old work boot. A train into Philly to crash at a friends. With early morning, painful rising and he gives me a ride to the airport. The infamous discount airline cuts me a deal- $38 and I can go anywhere they're going- the only place they're going is Atlanta, Georgia. Atlanta is their hub so I take it from there I can get to the Midwest.

The plane sets down in Atlanta and I walk into the waiting room and read the telescreen listing flights. One boarding to Chicago ten bays down. I heave my bag and run through the great hall of the industrial labyrinth, disheveled enough to be comical, or just a little frightening to the average first class ticket. Breathing heavy I spin to a halt in front of the attendant just as the last passenger boards the skeleton arm that leads to the human cargo hold. "I have to get on this plane!"

"Alright let's see what we can do," the stewardess replied. Charming and efficient, she blew me away, getting me on the plane to my great surprise. Another 38 bucks, funds getting low. I flash her my best smile.

Three hours to kill in Chicago - final destination, Minneapolis. I get a Greyhound and from here it's into the wee morning to the St. Paul terminal. Waiting is my old friend in a borrowed station wagon. We have ties made strong by struggle and time, but our friendship has never been what you'd call intimate. It's a friendship of backslap hugs and communiques, political conversations and projects, and the general electric ambient tension of battling egos.

We arrive on a rainy Minneapolis night, on the border of a working class neighborhood and stunning swath of wilderness and trails along the Minnehaha creek and further where it joins the Mississippi. The morning is buried in darkness and mist. He gives me my options. I don't feel like sleeping. He goes off to whatever corner he crashes in and points me north up past the two brick houses to a wigwam covered with blue tarps which offer the darkness a translucent hum from the fire inside.

A hastily made cardboard sign outside of the fire reads No swearing No trash in fire No cooking Sacred Fire. A small ring of chairs and old school bus seats rings the smaller circle of rocks. I take a seat across from the only other parishor.

"Is it alright for me to be here?"

"I think the grandfathers will not mind if you warm yourself by the fire."

"My name's Wesley."

"Wizard." The extended hand, the firm grip of a veteran of wars and rock climbing. He has long grey hair and great white beard and twinkling eyes. "I'm gonna go check on the trees. You can come if you want."

I rise and follow him into the night. We take the sidewalk south past the house and an open meadow spaced with towering oak trees, naked in late fall, cragging upwards, their naked fingertips concealed in the torn and ragged strips of mist.

"I'm gonna build the corral there for when the horses come." Wizard motions to the field.

"When are the horses coming?"

He looks at me hard and hesitates. "I only just met you. People around here are real concerned about not letting secrets get out, I gotta be more careful about that."

"Hey man, that's cool." We walk in silence. I notice a clean track of tennis shoe in the mud, and he catches my glance.

"That's real good you notice that. Around here you get to recognize people's tracks and it can be a real useful skill."

We come to a trail head through what I later learn is oak prairie savannah, one of the last ecosystems of its kind, and the reason Earth First! is here protecting this area. Before me stretches, like some immense pile of shit, the dumped and forgotten waste of the urban fathers. 30 feet high and a football field in expanse, the prairie must be turning to fossil fuels from its weight. Umpteen hundred tons of wood chip mulch, all that's left to remind us of the storms of early spring, the winds which decimated Minneapolis, destroying 10,000 trees snapped green and hopeful, or dead and forgotten, or only maimed, casualties of the weapons of the air.

The more apocalyptic of the crew refers to them as global climate change storms. But the municipal cleanup crews came behind and chipped the trees and the spin doctors work overtime to convince the world that global warming is just a doomsday boogyman and that everything may commence as usual. Swept under the cities rug goes the evidence, behind the people's park, over the forgotten burial mounds, left to smolder with decomposition, leaking ethanol and smoke from behind the trees. The instances of respiratory disorders in the neighborhood skyrocket. The spin doctors blame the smoke from the Sacred Fire.

Wizard heads north. I stay behind to watch the sun rise from the steaming peak of the mulch pile. So it was that I descended into a world populated with spirits and shamans, witches and sundancers, hippies and squatters, activists and earthlovers, wingnuts and revolutionaries, infiltrators and secret police. And among them I received an education by fire, the desperation of destiny, the burden of history, and the kiln cracked blood vessel of a clumsy wrought heart.

* * *

I had arrived on the ninth day of the hunger strike. The hunger strike was conceived of as an organizing tactic, a sacramental prayer, an offensive and a defensive move. Formerly a part of the history of Irish political prisoners, the broader concept of fasting rings timeless in both Christian and Native religious traditions. It was also a way of seizing the moral high ground from the public's perspective, an act of self-defense, a response to the authorities defamations, calculated to render less viable their option of coming in with the brute squad and smashing heads.

The hunger strikers are as diverse and balanced as they could manage. Two women, two men, all young. Earth is the only Native of the quartet, or quintet, if you count Parrot, the support person and live in media middleman. The other male is Marshall Lough, older than I guess, hidden behind an eccentric Errol Flynn-as-Robin-Hood moustache and beard. Then there is Starlight, a buzzcut blond who goes barefoot despite the chill, and who could not have been more accurately named. The last one was a surprise, a girl I'd met back in the West Philly anarchist scene, looking quite a bit better than last time I'd seen her, trashed and nearly naked and off to join the circus to breathe fire and do other assorted sideshow tricks that would make Barnum and his target audience cringe.

Still stunning and impossibly stylish, she has a glow I don't remember. She tells me she goes by Eliza here.

The five of them stay in a tipi distanced from the rest of camp. They are symbolically located next to the Four Trees. The trees are an enigma to themselves.

They are bur oaks aged between 150 to 250 years old depending on whether you talk to the State-sponsored spin doctors or Dan the Oakman, a local arborist. They are pointed in the four directions, north, south, east and west. These directions are one of the major symbolic themes of plains Indian cosmology and prophetic literature. Each direction has a corresponding color, red, white, yellow and black. According to the current spiritual vision of the American Indian Movement, these colors stand for the four colors of man, who must unite and live together in peace. The colors also have older deeper mythological symbolisms, the white giant lives to the north, the thunder beings dwell to the west, etc.

The presiding story of the cultural function of the trees is that they formed the base for funeral scaffoldings for a year or so after death and then the bones cleaned by wind and sun and scavenger were collected and buried in shallow unmarked mounds.

For the first three days of his fast, Earth has performed a vision quest within the perimeter of the Four Sacred Trees, neither eating nor drinking, in constant prayer.

My task is to lighten the load on the hunger strikers and their support. This basically consists of fetching them whatever they might need, which isn't much, and pulling security shifts; explaining what's going on to well-wishers and screening visitors. Five people in the tipi is a full house, so my home for now is a tarp strung up between two trees in the shape of a wind tunnel, and it seems to function much like one at night, but this tarp seems to be the place where spare blankets are stored so I do alright.

Night falls, the earth's hungry children retreat into the warm glow of the canvas stretched tight against the darkness, and the prairie becomes my lonely kingdom, the mulch pile my empty castle. Bzzt crackle How bout you Rebel? *Yeah Rebel here. Is anybody down at the trees?* That's me Rebel. *Who?* Uh, Methane, Methane on duty down at the trees. *Copy that. Can I get a radio check?* Yeah, Thunder here. I turn the radio down and let it hang from my wrist, in my pocket, and then resting on the ridge beside me. It's chatter seems so distant beneath the stars, like picking up shortwave from some distant civilization.

A figure white against the path approaching. I stand for a better view. I imagine myself from his perspective, silhouetted against the night sky, or perhaps he doesn't notice me at all. I descend to meet him as he nears the trees: "Good evening."

"Good evening yourself. My name's Paul. I'm a witch."

"Well I don't think I've ever met a witch before Paul. My name's Wesley."

"I'm sure you have. You just didn't know it." His voice has a high-pitched tremble, like one might imagine a banshee to speak if they broke off wailing long enough to have a conversation. He has a mess of Abbie Hoffman hair, but stark white, and a snow-grey beard kept nicely trimmed.

"I come down here to sleep under the trees, it's a powerful place."

"How long have you been coming here?"

"Oh, we've been doing ritual at the trees and in this area for two years now. We knew as soon as we found this place how sacred it was. Many of our rituals were spells to put out a call, a call for people to come who could protect this place."

"Well, here we are."

Joel

We had been practicing our climbing skills for a while, and [later, when] we had a little bit of time on our hands, we had a guy dress up like Spiderman and climb up on this crane, 30 or 40 feet. They were working on the [same] road down there [by Lake street]. We had two people climb up the crane, and Spiderman dropped down below the banner. It got a little windy ... It got in the paper, and no one got arrested. It stopped their work on construction for a couple hours. **(See photos p. 113)**

One thing we did was set up some platforms in some of the bigger trees behind the houses. I also did some media work and wrote a grant, an emergency headwaters grant for $1000.

[The Free State] made me a little more cynical, made me feel like the people in power are all the same. I already knew that, but this was more proof. The people who pushed this through were all democrats, supposedly liberals … It made me feel like more extreme measures were necessary, because nothing seemed to work, even with these liberals in power, even with something that was so obviously [wrong].

Mike White

So, I can remember when the houses were all locked up, and nobody was in them. This was way early, I don't remember what month it was, but it was pretty early in the time.

There wasn't very many people there at that moment, and we had a big meeting, and everybody decided not to break into the houses and not to unlock the doors. There was people camping and there was tents and stuff, a few tents, not very many. We had this big old huge meeting and we all decided, well, we didn't all decide, but the meeting decided not to go into the houses, and we weren't gonna open up the houses.

Right after the meeting, me and some of my friends decided to throw the meeting out the window and break into the window of one of the houses. We just broke into all the houses after that. It turned out to be the best decision, because I mean we had that whole area that we could defend. That was an interesting day. It kind of changed a lot of things for the Free State. We had a meeting about it and decided not to do it, and then just out of someone's knee, we got into the houses. And it turned out better, because we had homes, you know, for people who needed them. A lot of homeless people slept there. People who were completely unaware of what was going on had shelter, you know? They would be on the streets otherwise.

So, in the basement of one of these houses, we decided to lock down. We tried to build a tunnel underneath one of the driveways, from one house to the other. But I've never really seen people work so hard for something in my life! People just worked so hard just to build this whole place.

Back to the basement. What we did, is, we cut a hole in the ceiling of the basement. Upstairs, in the living room, there was this little nook and cranny, this little closet. You had to shimmy down this tiny, tiny hole. We figured that we would make the hole really small so that the cops would have to take off their belts when they went down there. We boarded the whole room up downstairs so there wasn't a door. With all this dirt that we dug up from the almost-tunnel, we shored up the walls, backed up the dirt against the walls on the inside. Then we commenced decorating of the bat cave.

It had a beautiful mantle and a fireplace, and every night we had a fire in there. It had a double dragon in there too. A double dragon is a lockdown; you stick your arm in a big PVC pipe with a chain and lock, and they can't pull you out. We decorated it, and there's all kinds of crazy things that we found on the riverside of the Mississippi river after combing it. There was all kinds of rusty apparatus's hanging from the ceiling, and it was kind of ominously scary, but it was very comforting to know that we built it.

When the raid came, they ended up blowing up the wall downstairs, just blew it up. I don't know what it was, but they blew a hole in the wall, sent dirt flying. The two people who were down there, Tox and Talia, got dirt in their face and got punched and kicked cause they wouldn't leave. I regret not being down there with them, having built it, with a video camera. I mean I know I probably would've gotten punched in the face, but I would've been with them with their pain. I regret that much. I really wish I woulda been down there with them.

I can also remember a period in the Free State when there was a whole lot of tents, but no one was really staying there anymore. The houses were still there, and there was a big surge of people and then it just slowed down... I remember a few days when there was only like five or six people there. And we had all these tents; we made it look like there was hundreds of people staying there! There was just all kinds of tents in the field, the homes were alive and it looked like there was people in them again. Even though there was nobody there it was still just a celebrated time, you know? Every day was precious.

I can remember seeing children there a lot. In the daytime moms and dads would bring their kids there, to see friends, whatever. That was always a happy time, when the kids were there. That was always good.

I can remember people working hard, and people being lazy. I did a little of both! Some people were OK with it, others really weren't. I didn't really think it made much sense to kick anybody out, unless they were really terrible and, like, smoking crack in one of the houses! Then I'd kick 'em out for sure! If they're gonna be there and have the knowledge in their head and not do anything wrong, but just kind of be lazy, that's OK. I don't think they should be kicked out, those people.

I can remember the preparation for the pow-wow. We had to get this rock, this big rock ... we started to dig it out of the ground, and it just turned out to be this gigantic rock! We couldn't get it out! We had to put it in the middle of the powwow and we could not get it out, so we had to use a smaller rock. That rock was kind of meant for us, it was kind of sad.

I can remember we hung donuts from the tree when the cops came to bust us. The cops laughed at them a little bit. There was just donuts hanging from trees. That was awesome. It worked!

I can remember the raccoons raiding in the summertime in the kitchen. At night if you just shone your flashlight behind the bushes behind the kitchen, you would see just hundreds of pairs of eyes all staring back at you. After a while we figured out that we had to sacrifice something to the raccoons. So every once in a while we'd just throw them a jar of peanut butter. That kept them busy chasing each other around! That worked out, it kept them out of the kitchen for a little while.

I can remember like a week straight where I just split wood. That's all I did. Get up in the morning and eat some potatoes and onions all fried up, that Sunshine would make. The wood chopping session. Tough, tough work! A lot of it was for our little basement cave, a lot of it was for the ABC house with the big stove in it, a lot of it was for the Sacred Fire. Most of it was to keep warm.

I can remember how tough it was in the wintertime to try and stay there. It was very hard to keep morale up in the winter, to keep people there. But the people who did stay in the winter, they proved to be like, the really good, hard core folks. A lot of times I couldn't do it. I was there some of the time in the winter, but not all the time, not like I was in the summer. It wasn't easy.

I got pretty frustrated with the dynamics of people after they took the houses and tried to move, stayed over by the Four Trees. There were people who seemed to think that if you weren't gonna work, you shouldn't be there. Many complaints. There were still people who just had their gift of music and they were OK, they didn't get complained at, for some reason, I don't know. I just got sick of all the complaining. morale was low in the winter.

Brie

My name's Brie. I was at the Free State in 1999, and I believe

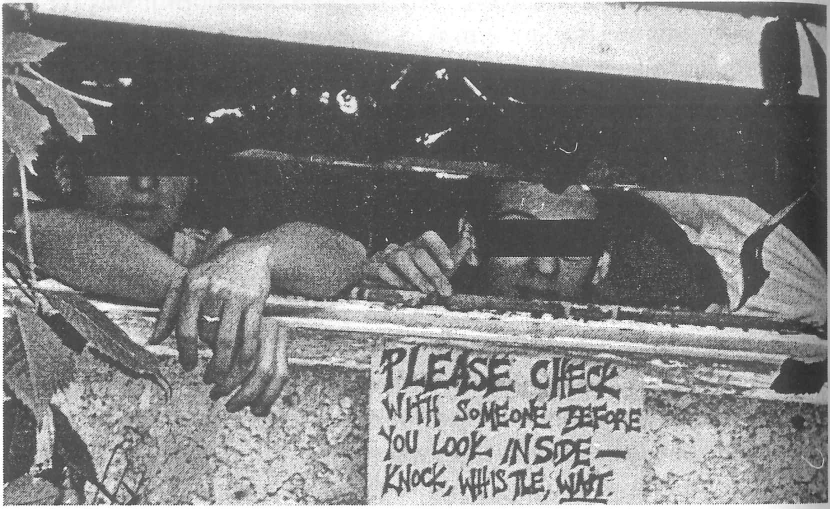
1998. There was a lot of things at the Free State, and this is a little poem that I've prepared for it:

The Free State was a very great place
In the cards, I'd give it an ace.

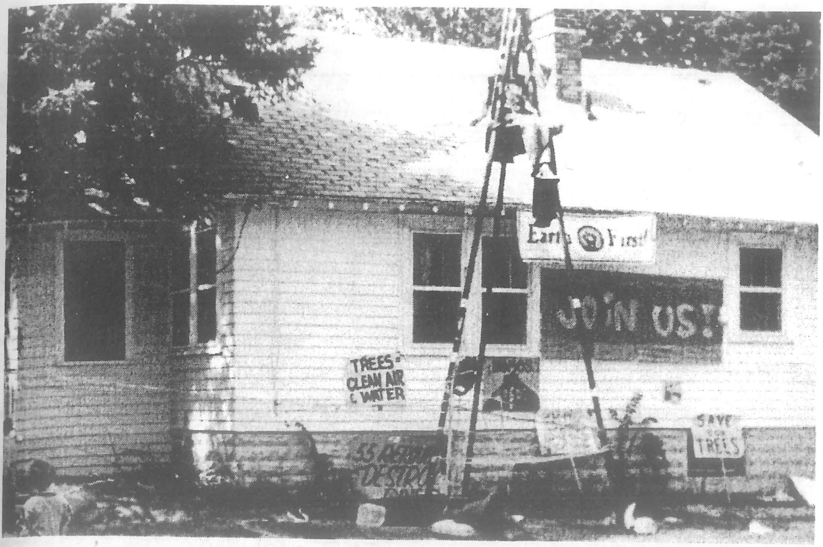
I remember one time the greatest memory: sitting on the porch and watching people gather around the bags of muffins that they dumpster dived. I think I really liked that particular place, it was the place where I grew up in my opening years. I think I was around five [years old]...

I remember visiting everyone, and the Sacred Fire that ran for over a year without ever going out. I liked the people there, because they were all so kindhearted, and ready to help anyone in trouble. They stood up for Mother Nature and the Four Sacred Trees. It's sad that the trees are gone now.

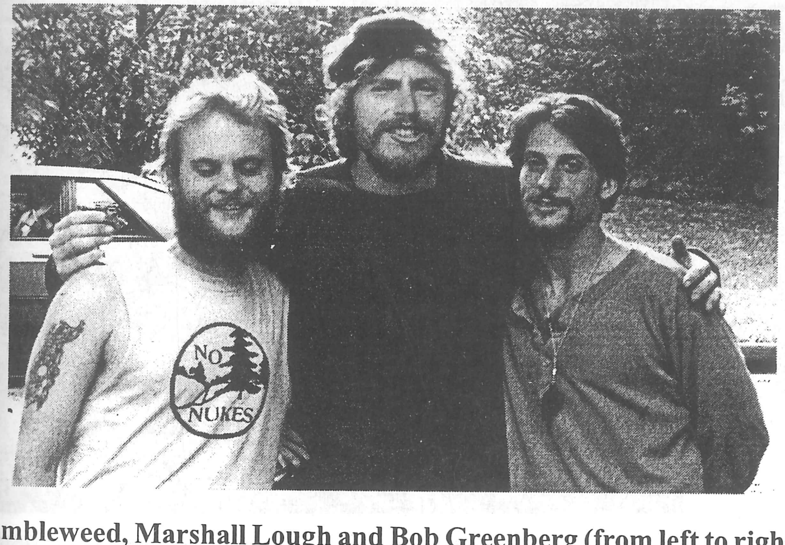
I remember the garage that they built all out of scrap wood. Everyone worked so hard to make that place safe and cozy. That's why I was so sad when I saw on the news, one of the abandoned houses with my toys in the fireplace, all being crushed. Some of my favorite books were there, like the paper bag books. But, the Free State may be gone physically,



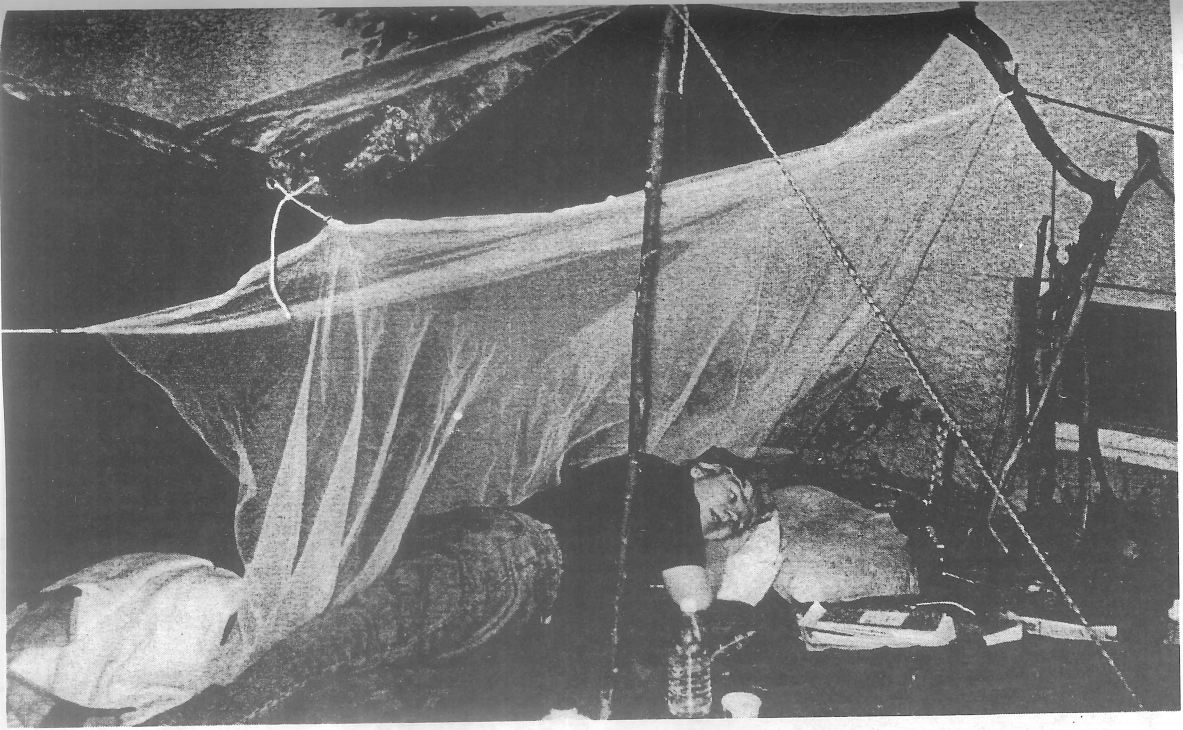
Some people think the fact of the women taking what was originally the only lockdown in a house led to perceptions of gender imbalance within occupancy at the first camp. (See p. 126 for details.)


Earth First!
JOIN US!
TREES = CLEAN AIR & WATER
SAVE OUR TREES

The tripod lockdown by the Tripod House at the first camp. An occupant would have their neck locked to a pole with a bicycle U-lock.



Tumbleweed, Marshall Lough and Bob Greenberg (from left to right) in the first few days of first encampment.



A man locked into a sleeping dragon, a metal pipe device that is set in the ground with concrete.

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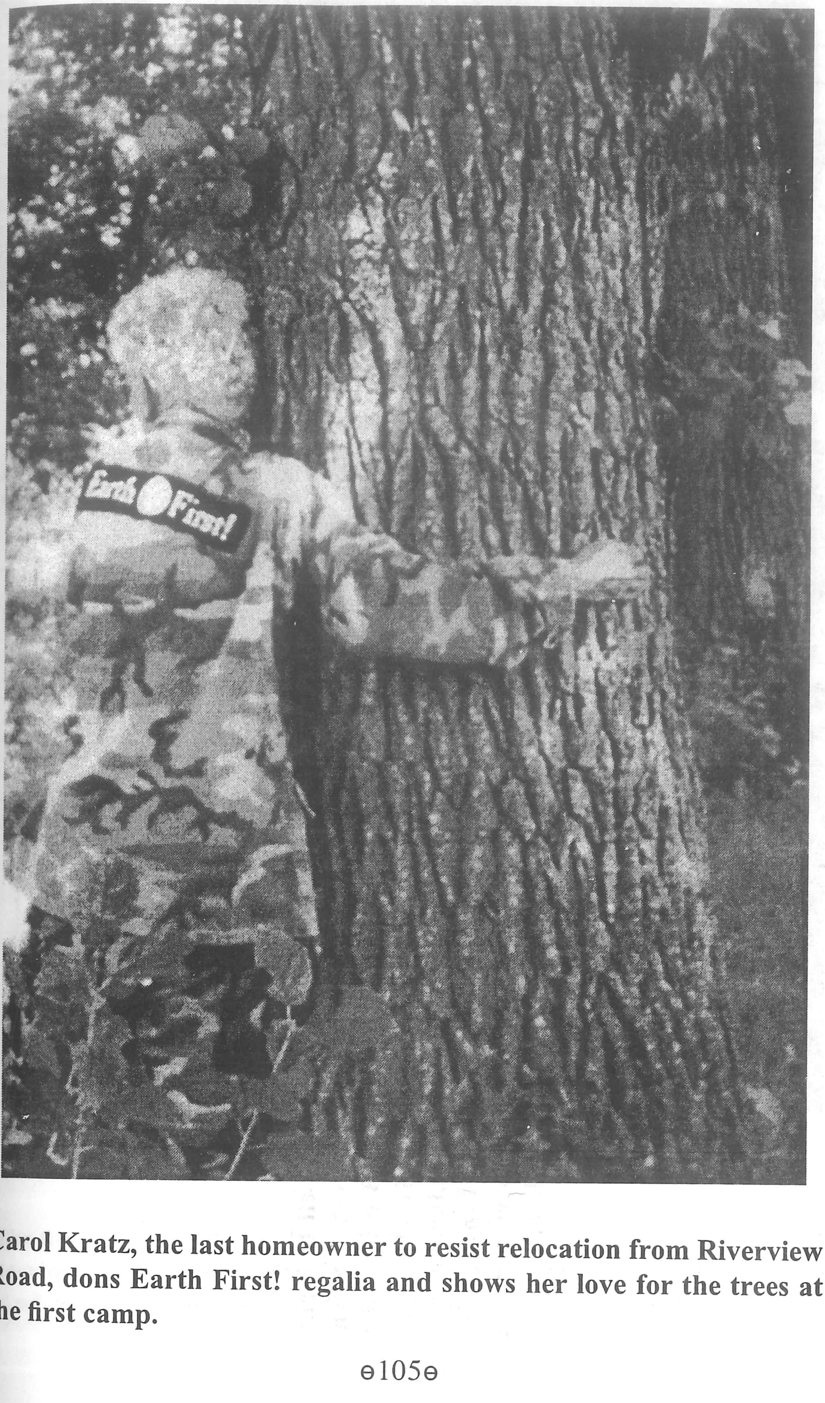

Earth First!

Carol Kratz, the last homeowner to resist relocation from Riverview Road, dons Earth First! regalia and shows her love for the trees at the first camp.

Pristine
YOU ARE NOT

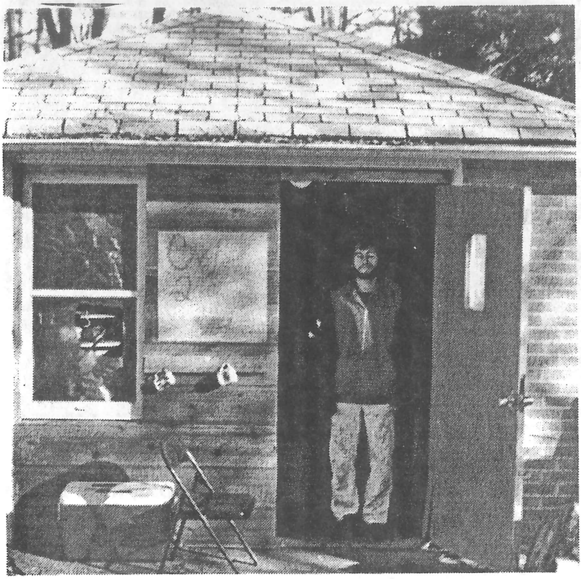
Left to Right: Bob Brown, Beverly Scott and Linda Brown standing in a yard at the first camp.

AMERICAN INDIAN MOVEMENT
NO COMPROMISE WE STAND UNMOVED

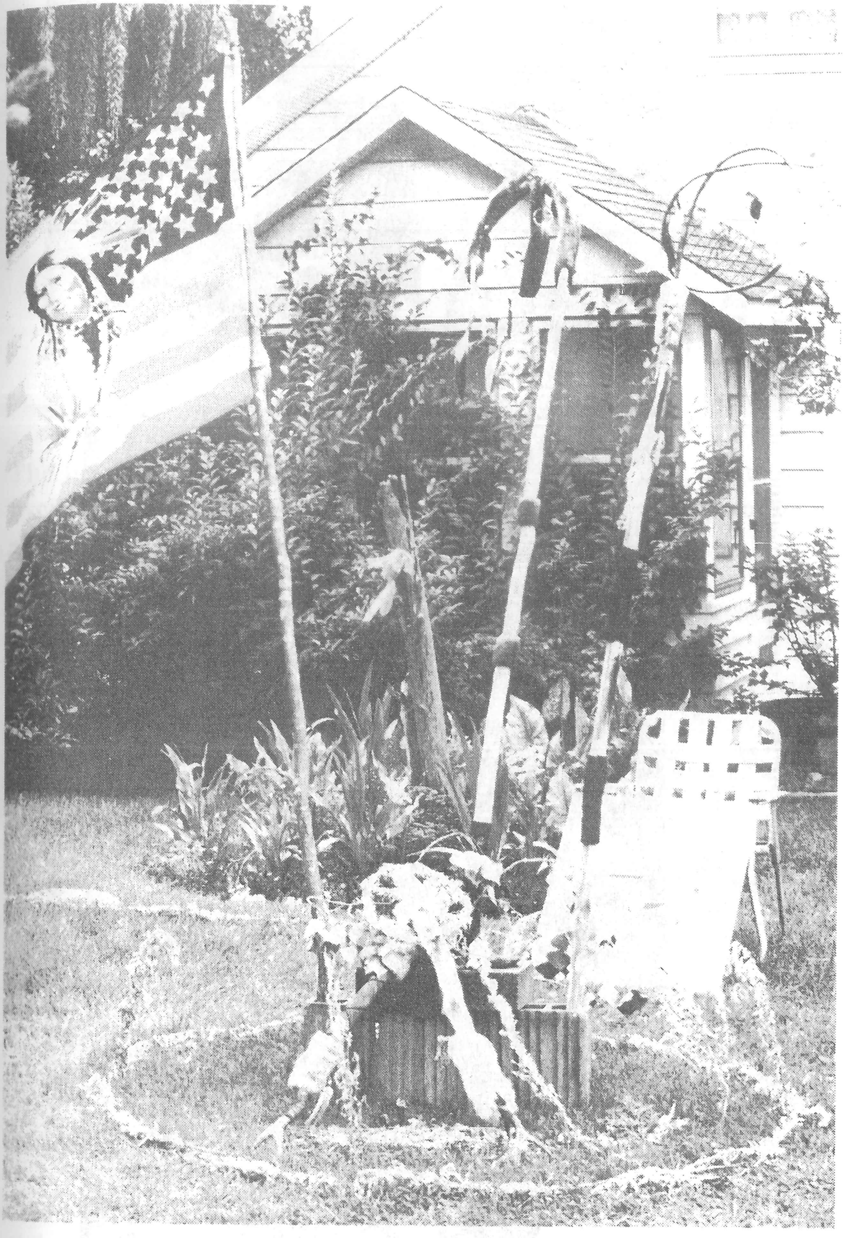
AIM was a strong presence at both encampments. There are still ongoing relationships between members of AIM and Earth First!ers. In the foreground from left to right: Chris Leith, Harry Charger, Clyde Bellecourt and Sky.

The first powwow of the Mdote Mdewakanton Dakota people, held in the clearing by the houses at the first camp, in fall, 1998. Left to right are Jim Anderson with his son Joey, Thunder, Wally Ripplinger, and Mike Scott.

Michael Scott's nine-foot tipi set up in a yard of one of the houses on Riverview Road.



Methane stands in the doorway of Cafe Two Pines. The cafe hosted regular "coffeehouses" with refreshments and an open mic. These served as community events, and attracted many newcomers to camp.



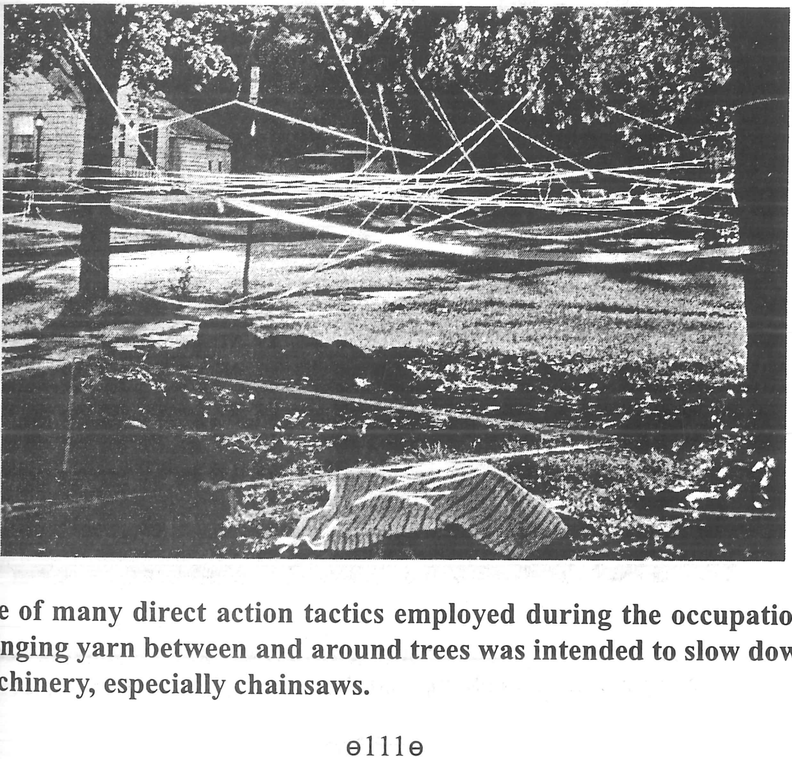
Sacred staffs and pipes on an alter at the first camp.

STOP THE RE-ROUTE OF HWY
WE LOVE U

Sister's Camelot, a local, mobile organic food shelf, delivers food to the first camp.

NEED HELP?
INFORMATION

The information table at the first camp, along with door-to-door flyering and community potlucks, helped the first camp to become and stay a part of the neighborhood.



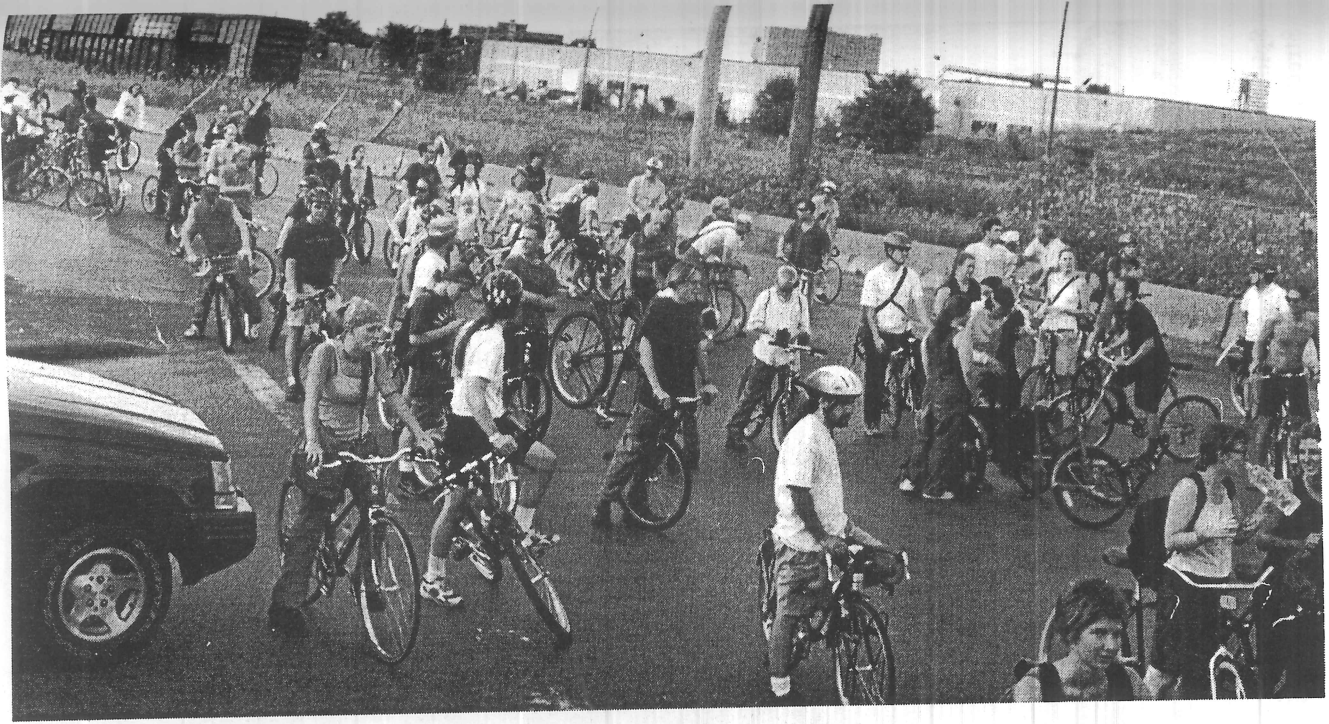
One of many direct action tactics employed during the occupation, stringing yarn between and around trees was intended to slow down machinery, especially chainsaws.

Native women drinking coffee at the first camp.

Bear circles up with friends around a drum. The drum helped to keep spirits high through all kinds of times throughout both camps.

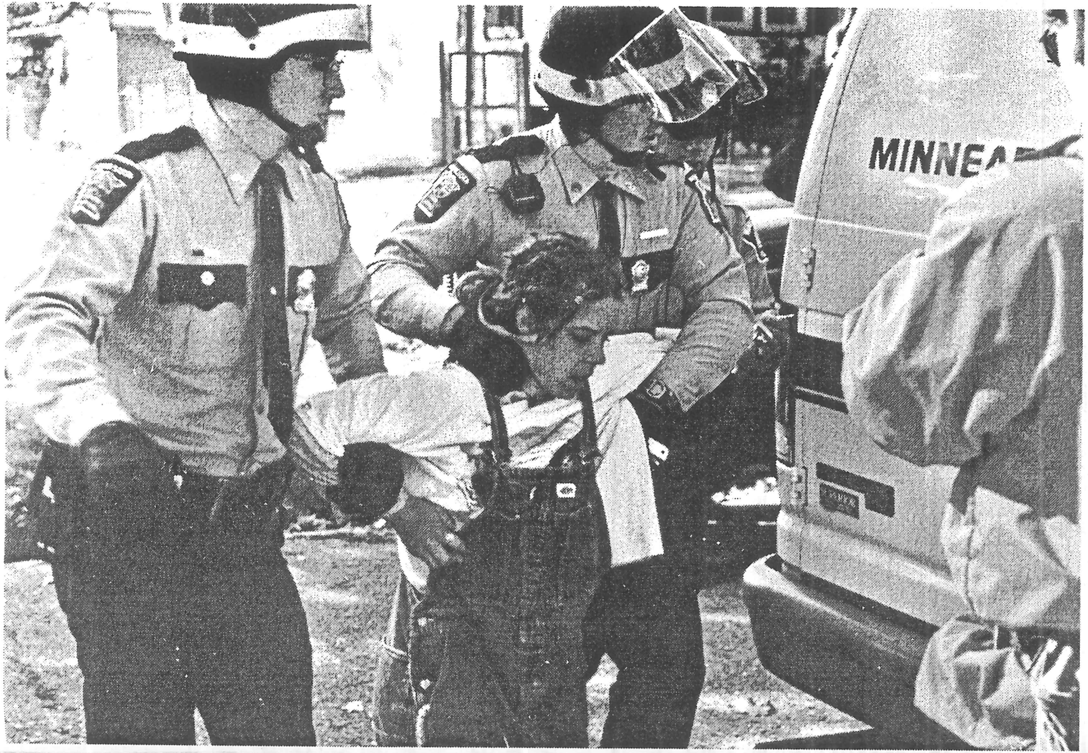
STOP THE REROUTE of 55
EARTH FIRST!!

Spiderman hung this massive banner from a crane overlooking Lake Street in South Minneapolis in the fall of 1998. (See p. 98 for details.)



The encampment made a great destination for Minneapolis' monthly critical mass bike ride, as both the riders and the campers had a few things to say about roads!

e114e



One of hundreds of arrests that occured in association with the campaign to stop the reroute. Arrestees were consistantly nonviolent, instead using passive techniques such as refusing to walk.

CHAPTER FIVE
Earth First!: A Brief History

By Bob Greenberg

At the end of the 1970's, many environmental activists had grown disenchanted with the major environmental groups. These groups had lost touch with the grassroots activists outside of the beltway and instead had cast their lot in cutting back-room deals with beltway insiders. This had resulted in catastrophic environmental losses of ancient forests, the damming of wild rivers and increasing levels of pollution.

It was from this climate that Earth First! was born, literally with a "crack." The first major Earth First! action was the symbolic cracking of the Glen Canyon Dam. EF! continued to capture the imagination of activists and the American public with their "no compromise" actions throughout the decade.

Founded as a movement, not an organization, EF! has only three principles: Deep Ecology, biocentrism, and "no compromise." Deep Ecology is the idea that no species, including humans, are any more or less important than any other species. A blade of grass is every bit as important as a human being. Biocentrism is the idea that life in all its forms is the center of all things, not humanity. "No compromise" was adopted because EF! activists felt that in a time of environmental crisis, the time for compromise had long past. For example, when 95% of the ancient forest had been destroyed, the time for compromise had passed. To continue to compromise was nothing other than outright defeat. Other groups would make deals to save bits and pieces of the last bits and pieces, but Earth First! wanted to save it all.

In this spirit Earth First! activists engaged in direct action, from spiking trees to prevent logging of threatened ecosystems, and decommissioning bulldozers which are the instruments of the forests destruction, to banner hangs that interfered with logging or mining operations. These actions bought time for the forests and their creatures, as well as brought these catastrophes to the attention of the American public. These and other activities earned them admiration within the environmental community and the wrath of industry and law enforcement. With this radical fringe in the environmental movement, centrist organizations appeared more mainstream, allowing them to appeal to the public and have more meaningful successes.

These types of actions, although not polite, were often effective. They were very risky as well. Many EF! activists have been injured, some seriously.

These bold and effective activities of EF! activists around the country inspired many in Minnesota to become active, adopting the strategies and tactics that had been so effective elsewhere. Several Earth First! groups became active at various times in MN. The most recent, however, was Big Woods Earth First!, which began in 1995.

In 1996, Big Woods Earth First! received information that a stand of old growth white pines was going to be logged. The Little Alfie timber sale had been sold and was to be cut, against National Forest Service regulations. In response, BWEF! began a midwinter forest road blockade, lasting 12 days, through the coldest part of the northern Minnesota winter. During this blockade, Smokey the Bear locked his neck to a logging truck, preventing the illegal logging from taking place, and buying the time necessary for other groups to file the lawsuits necessary to prevent the destruction of this rare national treasure. This resulted in the Forest Service being forced to reevaluate another 500 sales, and finally remove nearly 40 illegal sales from their sale list.

BWEF! Succeeded in changing the argument from how should we cut Minnesota's forests, to should we cut them at all, and that was a success.

A federal judge ordered the logging stopped, but victory was fleeting. The following year the cut was attempted again, and BWEF! swung into action with another road blockade, lasting nine days, followed by a one-day occupation of the Forest Service office in Duluth, MN.

As a result of the ruckus BWEF! raised, state Senator Doug Johnson told EF! Activists to leave northern Minnesotans alone and to instead pay attention to problems in their own backyard. Soon, activists in the cities began focusing on Highway 55, the road being rerouted through Minnehaha park in South Minneapolis, destroying ancient oak savannah, a working class neighborhood, the first State Park in US history, and the site of a Dakota creation story.

Little Alfie was eventually cut, but BWEF! had already been building relationships with the Stop the Reroute coalition. At the first Big Woods Rendezvous, a three-day direct action training, BWEF! was invited by these community activists to help protect the park. BWEF! spent months planning their role in defending the park from the reroute.

Marshall Lough

[We were inspired by] the developments on the west coast, particularly with Earth First! The stuff going on at Cascadia, the Free State at Warner creek, [all that] really influenced us a lot. There had been a standard civil disobedience element in the environmental movement for a long time, and I think people were watching and waiting, and wanting to kick things off in the Midwest, turning from symbolic arrests to creating alternate space with an occupation.

We were also excited because this was going to be in an urban area, and that was something Earth First! hadn't done before, that basically hadn't happened since the '60s. So often it's out in the forest, and very disconnected from the community. This was based on a relationship with a 70-year-old long time community resident! Building off that, we were not going to say this was a sacred area. We were going to work with the descendants of the people who know this is a sacred area, and if they agree to it, we're going to build a relationship off that. That was different than what a lot of other people had done, and what was built was one of the strongest things I've ever seen.

THEORY OF MOTIVATION #1

John Kolstad

Speculation was, we heard that the Carlson companies, financed by the St. Paul 1st Bank, is going to put some kind of a big complex down in that area, between where the road is now and the veterans' hospital.

Another cute story ... The council member for that area was Dennis Schulstad, who was in the Air Force Reserve. He was the one who pushed this whole thing through before he left office in the mid-90s. I'm told that when you're a desk jockey in the reserves, you don't get promoted, certainly not to a General level. After Schulstad left office, and left the whole 55 thing, he suddenly gets promoted to Brigadier General level in the Air Force Reserves, which means his retirement salary is going to be much more than it was. Was this the payoff to Dennis Schulstad?

CHAPTER SIX

Settling In

Stories From Fall, 1998

Michael Bayly

I first learned about the Free State in the summer of '98 through my friend Susu Jeffrey. Both Susu and I are part of the Wednesday morning vigil at the corporate headquarters of AlliantTech Systems - Minnesota's largest military arms contractor. Susu would often talk about the struggle to stop the reroute of Highway 55.

One day in August, Susu announced that there was going to be a "Stop the Reroute Powwow" at the encampment. A friend and I decided to go. While there, I had the honor of being shown the Four Oaks and the Coldwater Spring by Bob Brown. I appreciated Bob's sharing of the significance of the Four Oaks and the spring - and hearing it from a Native person gave it all the more power.

At that time, it was summer, everything was very green and lush. It felt like a very isolated place. Later, when the encampment moved to the Four Oaks, people were moving around a lot more, and much of the grass and shrubs were leveled. I was lucky to have experienced that area before that happened.

From that first day of visiting the oaks and the spring, I decided to get involved with the encampment. My involvement was always more of support. I brought food and water, and visited and spent time there. I also took a lot of photographs in an attempt to document the struggle to stop the reroute. ***(Many of the photographs in this book are by Michael Bayly. See inside front cover for website information.)*** I participated in many of the events of the encampment, especially after the first raid and the relocation of the encampment to the Four Oaks.

Another way I tried to help was by introducing the issue of the reroute into a class I was teaching on spirituality and social justice at the College of St. Catherine - Minneapolis. One whole class was focused on Highway 55 and included a panel of people involved in the struggle. The students were impressed by the variety of people who comprised the panel. The panel helped to shatter a lot of misconceptions that the students had about "protestors." One of the panelists was actually a fellow student from St. Catherine. Her presence on the panel and her testimony gave the students permission to think about the issue in a more personal way; to perhaps say to themselves, "Hey, she's like me in many ways, and she's doing this kind of activism! Could I?" Afterwords, some of the students from that class started visiting the encampment and getting involved.

Another rewarding experience I had involved meeting an African-American man named Patrick who was staying at the homeless shelter at St. Stephen's Catholic Church. I invited him to the second Stop the Reroute Powwow in 1999. He was very quiet and reflective as we walked among the Four Oak Trees, and later shared with me that his grandfather was from the Blackfoot nation. It felt good to have played a role in facilitating for Patrick a sense of reconnecting with his Native heritage.

Another inspiring aspect of the encampment was the sense of community that was always discernible - along with the diversity of this community and the way people worked through their differences in a peaceful and respectful way. Another thing that impressed me was how I, or anyone else, could visit the encampment and be welcomed and accepted. You could just turn up and go sit under a tree without having to explain yourself.

I was touched by the vigils that people held for the activists doing the treesits - especially at the Cottonwood. I also really appreciated the labyrinth constructed at the second encampment. It was an outward sign of the sense of spiritual connection with which the area resonated. Walking the labyrinth literally connected you with the land, and, by extension, the special community that had grown up on the land to speak for it and protect it.

Jim Anderson

Infiltrated

The first guy that we discovered was a half-breed Indian guy like us. Me and Michael were really struggling with the video stuff, cause we weren't video technicians, didn't know what to do. So this John guy comes into camp, and was like, "Hey, I know how to do all this stuff." It was just what we needed. So he was explaining and teaching us about the cameras, so we did get a little good out of him. I had him sleep in my tipi by the door. He was talking some strange shit to some people, but not to me, so I was under the assumption that he was a righteous dude.

Then little Bob and Marshall came and started telling me that they were checking him out, and they found out that some of the places he said he'd been and stuff he said he'd done wasn't true. They said, "We think he's a narc." I kind of stood up for him. I'm no expert on this shit, I was just looking at what he was doing to help us.

So they checked him out and said, "We have to do something." So I said, "Well, let's get rid of him then, go deposit him at the airport or something." So we kind of got around him and started asking him questions about what he was doing there. He had a knife, so we asked him to disarm himself. He said this and that, and we said, "No, you gotta go." So he said, "Well, I don't want to go to the airport, I want to go to the bus station."

So we brought him to the bus station, and we heard from Louie Goodbird, who happened to be down there, that when we dropped the guy off, an unmarked police car with two suits picked this guy up. So the next day we found his cell phone, cause he didn't get all his shit, and in his cell phone was three different IDs, so we knew that he was an infiltrator. He was the only one that I know of that we caught red handed, but I'm sure there were all kinds of them.

Bob Greenberg

John Glass showed up in camp about the beginning of the third week and immediately started trying to get in good with Jim Anderson, myself, Boxcar Lily and other com, security and media folks. He seemed too eager, he was asking questions that were disturbing to me regarding security (radio frequencies, etc.) and he offered to do security right away. At this early point in the camp we took security very seriously and we did not let just anyone do it. I explained that once we knew him better we would let him do some of the things that required trust. He kept pushing me. I shared my concerns with Boxcar Lily. We decided to test him with information to see how he would respond to it. What I told him got back to Boxcar Lily, which increased our concern. We approached Marshall and Tumbleweed with our concerns. Tumbleweed had been picking up transmissions in the low 200s in the encampment for the last day (since John arrived), and those are reserved for military intelligence and federal intelligence agencies. We decided that I would approach John with our concerns.

John told me that he was Mike Meese's nephew (Mike is the bedrock of the Buffalo Nation's campaign) and I should feel free to call him with any concerns. He did not think that I would. I called Mike, who I'd met once before. I told Mike about John, he told me that he'd been at Buffalo Nations known as Jason Hammel and had stolen money and equipment from Buffalo Nations and the Western Shoshone Defense Project, and to boot, he was not Mike's nephew.

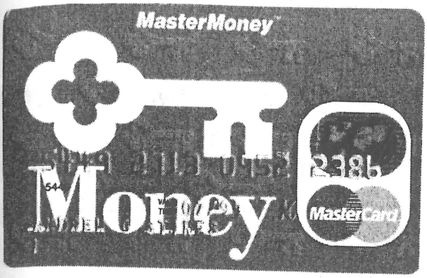
We discussed this and our knowledge of and experience with infiltration and COINTELPRO and we decided we would go to Jim Anderson and explain what we knew and what we wanted to do about it. When Marshall and I went to Jimmy's lodge, John was there, working on a video camera and getting on well with Jimmy. Jimmy didn't want to believe us, but he deferred to us due to our past experience in these matters.

It was so dark when we finally approached John that Jimmy's camcorder only picked up the sound. We did it around the Sacred Fire with about a dozen people there. John did not respond when we told him that I had checked with Mike Meese, and that he had told me what John had done. His silence was incriminating as far as we were all concerned.

We told him to gather his stuff and we would give him a ride well away from camp. He requested that we bring him to the Greyhound depot. Tumbleweed, Marshall, me and another person piled into my car, drove him to the bus station and dropped him off.

When we got back to camp we discovered that he had left his cell phone and identification behind. He had a current U.S. Army ID under the name Andrew Stines, an ATM card and Medic/First Aid certification card under the same name, a Montana fishing license under the name John Glass, a hunting knife with the name J. Montagne etched into it and the sheath and business cards for Cold Mountain Cold Rivers Coalition with the name Jason Hammel. The cell phone had a number called "milint" in it. I smashed the phone on the pavement with a hammer, soaked it in

The IDs on the next page were recovered from John Glass / Andrew Stines. The Army ID, which was current and active, was sent to Western Shoshone Defense Project to help them recover their stolen equipment and money and to identify Glass, or whoever he was.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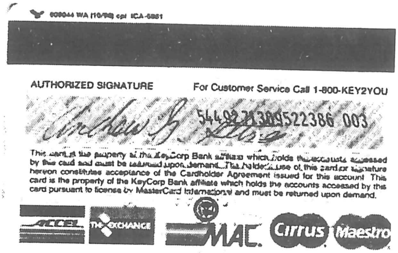
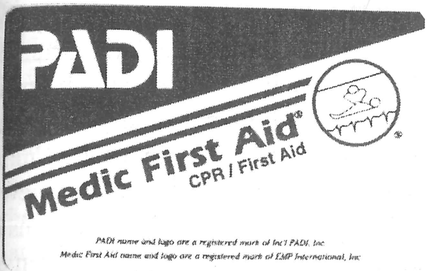

609044 WA (10/96) cpl ICA-6881

AUTHORIZED SIGNATURE
For Customer Service Call 1-800-KEY2YOU

Andrew G. Stines 5449213309522386 003

This card is the property of the KeyCorp Bank affiliate which holds the accounts accessed by this card and must be returned upon demand. The holder's use of this card or signature hereon constitutes acceptance of the Cardholder Agreement issued for this account. This card is the property of the KeyCorp Bank affiliate which holds the accounts accessed by this card pursuant to license by MasterCard International and must be returned upon demand.

ACCEL
THE EXCHANGE
MAC.
Cirrus
Maestro


PADI
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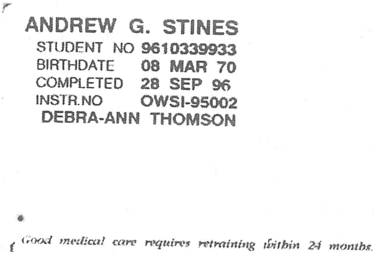
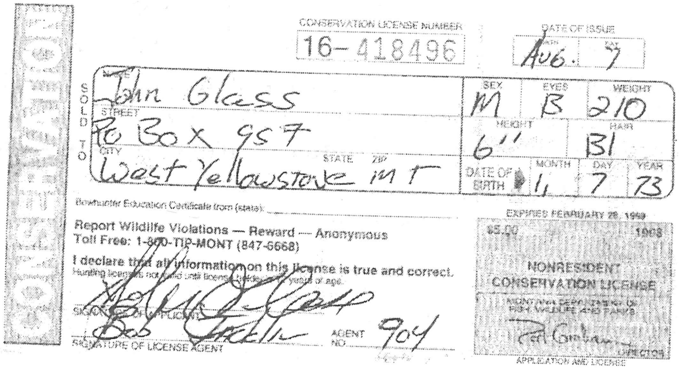

ANDREW G. STINES
STUDENT NO 9610339933
BIRTHDATE 08 MAR 70
COMPLETED 28 SEP 96
INSTR.NO OWSI-95002
DEBRA-ANN THOMSON

Good medical care requires retraining within 24 months.


CONSERVATION

CONSERVATION LICENSE NUMBER 16-418496
DATE OF ISSUE Aug. 7

SOLD TO
NAME John Glass
STREET Po Box 957
CITY West Yellowstone STATE MT ZIP
SEX M EYES B WEIGHT 210
HEIGHT 6' HAIR Bl
DATE OF BIRTH MONTH 1 DAY 7 YEAR 73

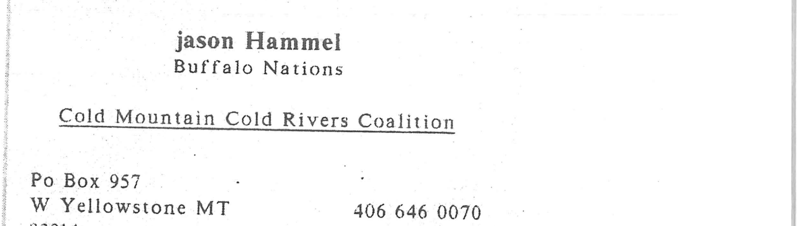
Bowhunter Education Certificate from (state): ____

Report Wildlife Violations — Reward — Anonymous
Toll Free: 1-800-TIP-MONT (847-6668)

I declare that all information on this license is true and correct.
Hunting licenses not valid until license holder is 12 years of age.

SIGNATURE OF APPLICANT John Glass
SIGNATURE OF LICENSE AGENT Bob Freckle AGENT NO. 904

EXPIRES FEBRUARY 28, 1999
$5.00 1998
NONRESIDENT CONSERVATION LICENSE
MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF FISH, WILDLIFE AND PARKS
DIRECTOR
APPLICATION AND LICENSE


jason Hammel
Buffalo Nations

Cold Mountain Cold Rivers Coalition

Po Box 957
W Yellowstone MT
83814

406 646 0070
406 646 0071

water and ran it to a dumpster miles from camp.

Marshall Lough

The North House lockdown was interesting. **(See photo p. 102)** [At the beginning], it was the only lockdown that was physically in a house, and there was debate about the possible greater charges and/or violence that the people there might face. So there were different affinity groups for the different lockdowns, and the women's affinity group decided to take this lockdown, the most intense one.

I honestly think one of the reasons why there were perceptions out there that this was an intensely male-dominated struggle during the first couple weeks was because a lot of the really intense women who were involved were locked inside the house and wouldn't come out, at all. And they didn't do press interviews, they didn't see that as being their main focus. (At that time there was 24-hour satellite hookups, live interviews, really intense coverage for the first two of three weeks...) This happens in a lot of struggles, you get men gravitating towards the media and women doing the really intense work that needs to happen.

This dynamic is reflected to some extent in this book as well; there are numerous women, who I personally know were critical to the movement against Highway 55, who for various reasons did not contribute to this book. As an editor, there was not much I could do about this, beyond reaching out equally to all parties. It is interesting to me that the final ratio of contributors is three women for every four men.

Bob Greenberg

The North House lockdown was a direct action technological marvel. A 55 gallon drum had three four-inch holes cut into it. Through these were placed three lengths of four-inch diameter pvc pipe two feet off the ground, parallel to the ground. Each of these pipes had three holes drilled through them, and half-inch rebar passed through these holes at various angles. The drum was then filled with cement a few inches, making sure to leave the pvc pipes unfilled. Rocks, wood, metal, rope and other materials were mixed in with the cement to require more types of cutting or hacking tools, or to damage them. Another layer of cement, repeat until full. The "dragon" was left above ground, while all others in camp were "sleeping dragons", and dug into the ground with top-holes.

Once the cement had dried, three sitting people could each comfortably put an arm into the pvc pipe, with their wrist at one of the pieces of rebar, attached by a caribiner or d-clip. This way they could release at will, but could not be removed without the use of torture or time-consuming destruction of the lockdown. This one went a few steps further.

Attached to this dragon were three Kryptonite Cobra Harley-Davidson motorcycle chains. BWEF! had used these in a previous action, and they had broken three of the jaws of life before the fire department cut the fence because they couldn't cut the chain. One of these was wrapped around each of the lockdown people, and they were locked together. Then the room was barricaded.

Other lockdown rooms were fortified much better, but the only other lockdown that compared to this one was the ABC house chimney that had been filled with cement, had a sleeping dragon in the top of the chimney (**See photo p. 190**) and a double dragon in the bottom of the chimney with a two inch diameter cable running between the two dragons so that if they pulled one out, it would tug at the other, potentially collapsing the chimney/wall/house on those in the basement. Just like the tripod, the purpose of a lockdown is to play to the conscience of the cops. If they will or might hurt or kill you if they just pull you down, it buys time while they find a way to extract you.

John Kolstad

My name is John Kolstad, I've lived in St. Paul/Minneapolis most of my life. I was born in St. Paul, 1942. My family were Democrats, and at one time socialists. They had not been political activists, but had done some work politically, and certainly understood about the way politics work, and mostly thought the Democrats did a better job doing things for the working class people. So I've been a Democrat most of my life, with the same philosophy.

I started out a career to become a physicist in college, and then switched to music, feeling that people may not like my music, but at least it wouldn't kill them ... if I developed some new and better nuclear weapon, it would be used by the powers that be, to destructive and threatening ends, so I left that and went into art and music. In 1983 I helped start a music distribution business, to help stores get the recordings of artists that were not as well known ... I've now been president of it for almost 20 years.

All this time I was active in the community. I served on many boards; art boards, music boards, the Micro Loan committee, funded by the Minneapolis Community Development Association (MCDA) ... So I've been a Democrat, a progressive one, in contrast to the corporate liberals and their establishment ... I helped start the DFL green caucus about ten years ago. We got John Marty endorsed as governor candidate, a very progressive green guy, and then big money came out and backed Arne Carlson, and I began to be disgusted with this whole DFL thing ...

But all this time, I was on the Green Caucus, The Lake Street Council, The Board of Seward Neighborhood Redesign, very involved in the community and DFL politics, a director in this Senate district, 62, which is the district where the Highway 55 issue took place ... I was all these things, on the cutting edge of all the environmental issues, yet I had never heard of what was going on out at Highway 55! I was active in the community, politically, business wise, and financially through the MCDA meetings, yet I was not aware of the situation at Highway 55.

So the supposed open political process that the Democrats had talked about all these years, was a lie. They lie! This was a construct. They decided what they wanted to do, they appointed a citizens committee, who was against what they wanted to do, so they simply disbanded it and got another one! Then they said, "This was an independent citizens' committee that made these decisions." No, the decisions were already made. They were just trying to get somebody to rubber stamp them. I've seen this happen more then once.

Sage Passy

I'm Sage, and I'm 39. I have been working on water issues professionally for eight or nine years. I got drawn into this issue from a lot of different directions; spiritual directions, different collaborations that I was involved in, but also because I had a heightened awareness of destruction of habitats and water resources, and protection of vulnerable areas.

One of my first memories is walking around the area and noting all the wood chips that were scattered around the area. I thought, 'Hey, why not just come back and plant this area, because it's ripe, it's ready.' I do restoration projects, and I had been working on a project on the east side of St. Paul that was such a contrast to what I saw at Minnehaha.

On the east side of St. Paul, we were in the process of bringing back a lake that had been covered up and had a shopping center built on it. It was done in such a spirit of collaboration, that I was very struck by the fact that, in my own watershed, in my own neighborhood, a very different situation was occurring, where there was beating up of elders and harassment of people that were really trying to protect the water. I couldn't understand that and I was really emotionally distraught by that contradiction.

I had been working with organizations that were promoting the study of the Mississippi River and the historical sites around Fort Snelling. I was aware of how much work had been going into the establishment of educational resources. So to me it felt contradictory that they were obliterating potential stories that have just as much significance. Also, a lot of the projects that I had been working on had started with Great River Greening, and the principle of having contiguous pieces of land that were green and would connect. The interruption of habitat and the destruction of ecosystems is what we were working on trying to correct. So it seemed like, [at Minnehaha], there was just an ignorance of that whole principle, at the same time that a lot of people were really working hard on that [in other places].

I work for the Ramsey-Washington Watershed, which is 95% or 97% developed, so a lot of the work we do is going back to try and correct some of the water pollution issues. I'm working here with these 85-year-old men and women that remember what it used to be like, the bog, the lake, etc. Then they saw the dump trucks coming and filling it in. Then here we are again on our hands and knees, literally trying to rebuild it. [At Minnehaha] I said, "I'll be damned if I come back down there when I'm 80 and have to be putting those plants back in there!" That's how I felt about it.

When I stand back and look at the sequence of events, it seems like there were people ahead of their time trying to instill principles of community planning, urban development, and the preservation of green spaces, and it takes a long time for city government to catch up.

I've always said that the plants were leading me and directing me as far as the work I should do. So when I would go to the encampment, I was very tuned into the trees and whatever I saw as the understory of plants there, and what they were trying to communicate to humans about what they needed, and what we all needed together.

Annie Mohler

My name is Annie Mohler, I'm 52. I got involved in Highway 55 because I had a job in Bloomington, and I would stop by Minnehaha on the way to my job. Then I saw the houses there, so I stopped there, and started to get to know the people and go to different events.

It's complicated to talk about Highway 55 because there's so many levels. I felt real spiritual about Minnehaha Park, felt that it needed to be saved, that the oaks were sacred, that the place was sacred, that it was the intention of the city fathers that the place be saved. I had a friend whose uncle designed the city park system for Minneapolis and St. Paul. He had written about Minnehaha Park, and she showed me some of [his writings]. He even said that it should be saved because it was like the epitome of the Native American landscape. All this very poetic language. So I knew that it was never the intention of the founders of this city that the parkway lands should be used for highways, or anything like that. That's being violated in other parts of the city as well.

So I felt like there had been some kind of a breakdown, that a highway would go through there. So the protestors coming in and the Free State being there was making all the other levels of government need to look. Then what we needed to do, as people that weren't living at the Free State, was try and access those systems of government again, which, because we live in a democracy, we are able to do. If we lived in a total police state, the Free State wouldn't have been able to be there, and we as citizens wouldn't have been able to say, "Hey, there was a mistake here."

One time I asked the mayor, "What's the deal about Minnehaha Park?" First she said, "Minnehaha Park?" like she'd never even heard of it. Then she said, "We've decided Saint Anthony on the Main is where we're putting our focus." Which isn't a very integrated way to take care of your water or history.

Sage and I went and worked some magic, and did spiritual things down there. I tried to maintain alter at not the Four Oaks, but the two oaks, tried to go there and pray when I could. They were the two oldest trees. The Four Trees also were sacred in the Wiccan community. I lived with a woman, Antiga, back in '86 or '87. She said, "There's Four Oak Trees, and we do ritual there." She used to go down with these radical fairy kind of guys that she would do witchcraft with. She was mentoring me a little, and she said, "When it's your time, you will go down there also."

A lot of the things in the Wiccan community aren't advertised per se. You couldn't go into a bookstore and [have them] say, "Go down to the Four Trees." But she had been working there, and Starhawk and Antiga and some other woman did go down and pray at the Four Oaks, and do some things.

I was working with Intermedia Arts on a collaborative art project, and I was getting all this pressure not to do anything about Minnehaha Park. I didn't really know the people that well. I think it was because we were at the IDS, and one of the reasons they wanted the highway was to hook the IDS up to the airport, so [Intermedia Arts] wanted to keep getting their money, didn't want to rock the boat.

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Wiccan People, or the Witches: A Brief History

By Paul

In late fall of the first year of the Free State, we witches were planning a ritual amidst the Four Sacred Oaks. We asked Jimmy, the Cultural Chairman of the Mendota Mdewakanton Dakota people if it was OK. He responded that his elders told him that witches shared many things with Native Americans, a love for Mother Earth and prejudices from the dominant culture. As I pondered this statement, I thought about the roots of witchcraft and how we witches came to be on this land at this time working with Indians, Earth First!ers, and other community activists in defending this land.

Witchcraft or Wicca is a way of working with spirit, energy, and natural forces to manifest change in personal lives and communities. This spiritual practice works in tune with the cycles of nature and with male, female, and third gender deities. One of its basic tenets, the core of our ethics, is the law of threefold return; what you send out comes back three times.

The origins of witchcraft are lost in the mists of time. People all over the world have honored the cycles of the seasons and the earth as sacred. The earth as female or goddess is evidenced in the ancient female figurines found in caves throughout Europe and Asia Minor. Other examples are the clay tablets from Sumeria that tell the 5,000 year-old story of the great goddess Inanna. There are also tales of the priestesses of the goddess Diana in Greece, the sun god Mithra from Persia, and mentions of Druids by the Roman historian Tacitus. The ceremonies, theology, and the richness of day-to-day lives of these pagan cultures are lost to modern times. These cultures were principally oral traditions or their wisdom was deliberately hidden or destroyed because its world view ran counter to emerging dominant religions. Prior to the middle ages there is little information that can be tied directly to modern day witchcraft.

Many witches refer to the middle-ages as the Burning Times. In western Europe, 100,000 people, mostly women, were burned, hung, or executed in excruciating ways as witches from 1350-1750. Most of what is known about witches from this era is derived from confessions using torture. The idea that a witch was a devil worshipper developed at this time and was more related to Christian theology than what is known as witchcraft. There are sources that refer to "blessing witchcraft" or "white witchcraft" where people in western Europe, mostly women, worked as healers, midwives, and village seers. There is also some evidence that witches became leaders in land struggles as the aristocracy tried to evict peasants from the land. The terror and intimidation of these "burning times" and the limited amounts of printed mediums ensured that only sketchy information is available about any existing witch cultures prior to and during the middle ages.

Groups and individuals arose at the end of the 19th century and into the mid- 20th century that have had a significant influence on the emergence of modern witchcraft. The Order of the Golden Dawn, Aleister Crowley, Gerald Gardner, Dion Fortune, Victor Andersen, and, some say, the English boy scouts are some examples of influences that provided seeds of inspiration that mark the foundations of modern day Wicca. Some of these groups maintain that they reference secretive, age-old covens or books that have passed on ancient wisdom but these sources are not credible.

Modern day witchcraft arose from these roots but more significantly, from the intuition and creativity of modern day practitioners. The womens' spirituality movement of the 60s and 70s is one of the most fundamental reasons why witchcraft flourishes today. The womens' movement's search for a female deity led them to the goddess and to the word "witch" as a source of pride for powerful, independent women. The awakening environmental consciousness also led people to seek out a nature-based religion that reconnected folks with the sacred earth.

In the Twin Cities, witchcraft began to take a public face in the early 80s. The most open group was part of a national witches' organization called the Covenant of the Goddess (COG). COG was most visible through their public seasonal rituals. There were many other groups that began to emerge but they remained secretive due to fears of discrimination and hostility because they were witches. The climate has become more open in recent years and many covens and traditions such as the Minnesota Church of Wicca, Blue Star, and Reclaiming are presenting classes and rituals to the public.

To my knowledge, witches began to become involved in the

Highway 55 controversy in October of 1997. My coven organized a ritual not far from the Four Trees where we charged a cairn of rocks to be a transmitter for the voice of the land to call people to protect the land from the impending highway construction. It was at this time that we first became aware of the Four Sacred Oaks and began to do regular rituals within that blessed space. Not all witches are engaged in political struggles but our tradition, Reclaiming, suggests that if you honor the earth as sacred then part of our worship is to be active in land struggles.

When the occupation started, we were shy about being too open because of the stigma associated with witchcraft. As the occupation village matured, many of us took active roles in the Free State community. We washed dishes, did security shifts, participated in lockdowns, and did community organizing. Gradually, we allowed our spiritual practice to surface at the Free State and we found that our work was welcomed at camp by most. We did a ritual of protection near the tripod house in the first week of the occupation. There was a fall equinox ritual in the tripod house. Starhawk, a noted wiccan writer, did a ritual amidst the Four Trees. There was a ritual birthday party for a deity that ended up in the halls of MNDoT. We created a labyrinth, a spiral, and organized a series of monthly rituals known as "100 Witches" during the winter of 99-00. Countless individual witches created shrines and offered prayers and spells to honor and protect the land.

One of the most powerful rituals we did at the Free State was in December of 1998, one week before the police raid on the houses. 100 of us gathered under a starlit sky near the tripod house around a roaring fire. The Indian people were doing a sweat lodge ceremony not 50 yards from where our ritual was transpiring. We called in the elementals, the ancestors and divine beings that supported our work to give us inspiration and protection. At some point we went out onto the land around the Four Trees to listen to the land. We wanted folks to ask for information about what we could do as a community to preserve the land from the threat of the highway. For an hour or so, people sat with the land in the cold and the dark, listening. At some point, drums started amidst the Four Trees inviting folks to gather. We sang a song, played drums and danced beneath the branches of the Four Sacred Oaks, raising energy to charge our commitment to defend this land. Afterwards, we gathered at the Cultural Wellness Center and recorded our listenings.

These inspirations became the basis for a series of rituals over the next few months. In one ritual we created small wooden rafts and filled them with flowers, food and herbs. We launched them into the Mississippi to bring the news of the Four Oaks to people all along its banks and to invite their participation. We also created a large spiral near the Four Trees to bless the land and to serve as a meditative walk of inspiration for the camp community.

In our tradition we don't have a great being that tells us what to do. We listen to the call of nature and our own hearts as our authority. The witches that I worked with felt that the land called us to work with it. We felt that the highway department was casting its own spell on the land through its planning processes and blueprints. We felt that it was our responsibility to bring our prayers and rituals to support the community struggle to protect the neighborhood, the park, the trees and Coldwater Spring. We are proud of the role that we played in the Free State and continue our spiritual work to ensure that a pure, vibrant Coldwater Spring

Many Pagan and Wiccan people use spirals and labyrinths for meditation and prayer. Here, Sister Brigid of the Sisters of St. Joseph walks the labyrinth that the Wiccan community constructed at the second camp.

THEORY OF MOTIVATION
#2
John Kolstad

Peter McLaughlin, the County Commissioner, pushed the whole thing through also. I think his reason for doing so was he really believed it was the only way to get light rail started, and he really wanted light rail.

I always wanted to have a light rail, but this light rail is an abomination. It is 19th century technology, it is not going to be running independent of the streets; it is going to be stopped at every intersection like the buses, it's going to cost almost a billion dollars, it's not going to go anywhere, it's not going to do anything ...

If you're going to spend the money, they should've dug tunnels all the way out in the sandstone, which is very easy to dig in, you wouldn't have to worry about the weather, it would be underneath downtown, they could've connected them all over the place.

So I understand the people who pushed the light rail, but I think they made a deal with the devil, and they're not going to get a good transportation system out of it ... it will soon be obvious that this is a huge boondoggle.

CHAPTER EIGHT

The Raid on the Utilities and Other Stories

The Raid on the Utilities: Oct. 14th, 1998

Bear

One time a lot of people were going to St. Paul and demonstrating. We heard a rumor that they were gonna raid at 12 noon, and I said, "I got a funny feeling that might be true. We're gonna stay back."

We were there watching the camp, and about twelve o'clock, sure enough, about 13 State Troopers come tearing down the road right there. There were only six of us there. The first thing we did was right away went in front of the Sacred Fire and lit our pipes, and held our pipes there\. Then we called down to St. Paul and told those guys, "Get back here right away! They're raiding us!"

[The troopers] blocked the road so by the time everybody got back, about 300 or 400 people, they couldn't get in to camp. Zac and them kept up with the AIM drum.

The troopers put a bunch of us on a bus, and the thing that really made me proud, is some of the young children and the women, they sat right in front of the bus, wouldn't let the bus go forward or backward. They were gonna try and tear gas us, but then they saw all the kids in front of the bus and they wouldn't tear gas us. After about two or three hours they left, but they let the people out of the bus, because the kids wouldn't let the bus go forward or backward.

Ben Tsai

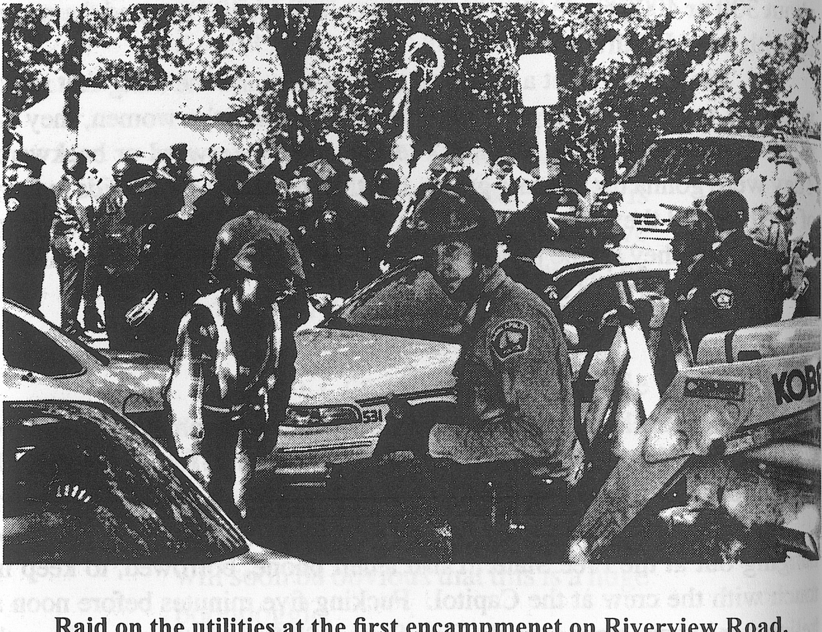
I could tell you about another raid, when they came to take out the water and gas line. Everyone had gone to the Capitol for a rally, [which was supposed] to start at noon.

Me and six other people stayed. Bright, sunny, beautiful day, hanging out at the Free State. I had a cell phone, borrowed, to keep in touch with the crew at the Capitol. Fucking five minutes before noon a helicopter buzzes right over the Free State, 120 feet off the ground, south to north, right over the houses. We were like shit! Looked at the watch, and it's noon. All of a sudden, rows and rows of cop cars, coming from the north and the south, rolling down the street. We were like, "Fucking bastards! This is too classic."

We actually weren't the hard core lock down people, a lot of them wanted to take a break. I'm running around making phone calls. It was sorta strange, because the cops were very hands off.

Of course when we saw cop cars coming down the street we thought, 'This is the end,' [but] they really wanted virtually no part of us. They formed the cop cars into these square formations on the street, bumper to bumper, and brought backhoes in.

By that time people were already coming back, and someone proceeded to lock down to the machinery and postpone it for another hour. They got the people removed and dug up the street, removed the water and gas hookup, filled the street back up, and left. That's an expensive operation [just] to do that. That [removal] is part of the process before you take a house down. There was some CD, people in front and in back of the vans to stop them from moving …



Raid on the utilities at the first encampmenet on Riverview Road.

Dick Bancroft

I have several incidents that I'd like to recount, for the sake of the record, involving Highway 55. Probably the most dramatic one occurred in October of '98, when I was told that they were going down to the capital building to make a formal demonstration of the facts around this issue with the state legislators and the governor and whoever this demonstration would attract.

At that time I had living at my house two people from Columbia who were displaced people. They had been dramatically run off of their land and their homes in Columbia, South America, by people who wanted their land, and who intimidated and threatened them, and in many cases their friends and relatives and neighbors were harmed or often killed, simply because people with more power and more money wanted the land they lived on. Two of these approximately two million internally displaced people in Columbia, were on a tour of the United States to explain their struggle and their issues.

The significance of these two people being there was, the day of the demonstration down at the Capitol I took them with me. We got there, and virtually everybody from the first encampment was gathered there, and they were just getting ready to make their statements over a loudspeaker when they were informed by cell phone that the police were moving in on the camp. Actually, this was kind of curious, because the police must have known that everybody was gonna go down to the Capitol, and there were only two or three people left at camp, to keep the Sacred Fire going. They called frantically and said, "The police are moving in with heavy equipment," and they weren't sure what they were gonna do.

It was a very pleasant day, warm medium summer day, and we all went roaring back to camp, and sure enough there were policemen and bulldozers and backhoes in place on the road. Their purpose was allegedly to disconnect the gas to the houses. So they had cordoned off an area in front of the seven houses, and were starting to dig.

It was strange, because there was movement of the backhoe, and danger of people getting hurt, but also, because of the onrush of all these people, the police started getting jumpy and pushing people back, seemingly for no reason at all. Then they backed a police van into the crowd and started to apprehend people and put them in the van. At this point it was not clear what zone was forbidden and what zone was acceptable, because the police van sort of moved through the barrier and the barrier was down.

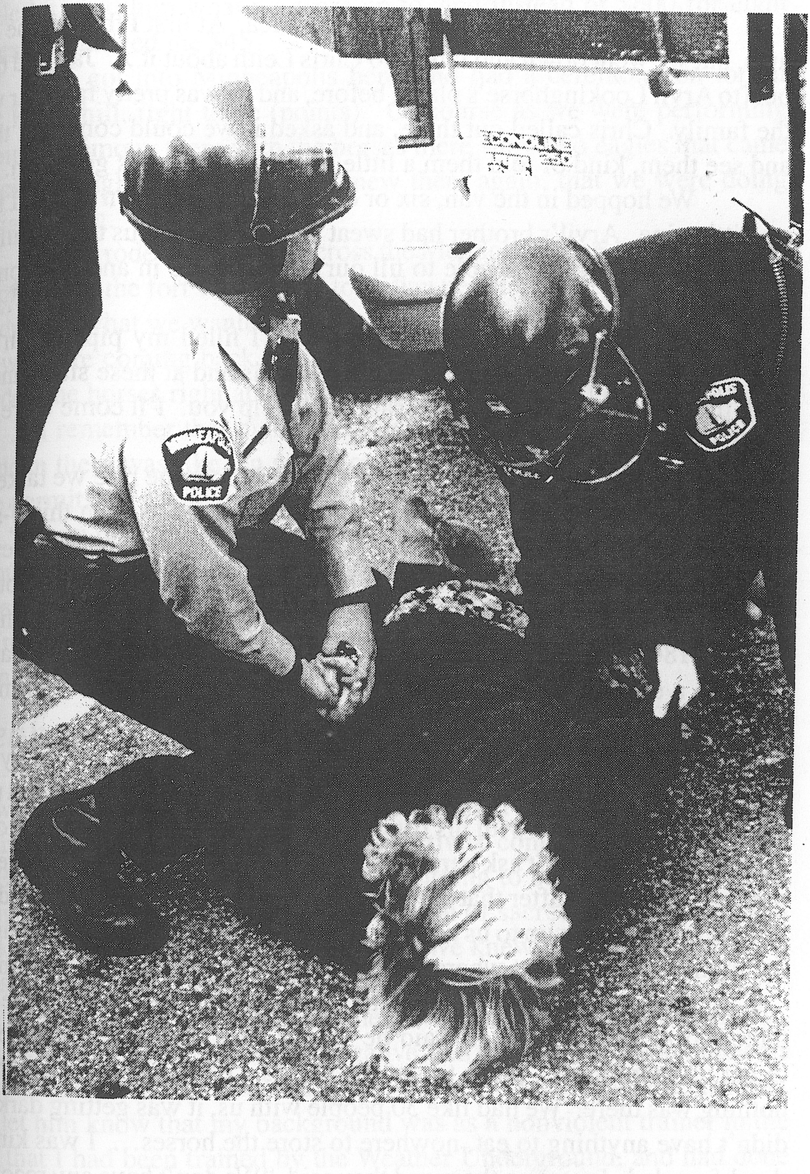
I sort of followed the van in, and all of a sudden they started handcuffing several of the people who were involved with the camp for reasons that were not apparent to me at the time. I didn't know what they did to warrant being handcuffed and put into the wagon.

All of a sudden out of the van, a woman emerged, without permission. She was not handcuffed. When she got partway out, the police grabbed her and threw her to the pavement. Three police jumped on top of her to handcuff her. Her face is up against the asphalt and they have a knee in her neck, and she's obviously in deep distress, and probably being injured. I photographed her extensively. It seemed as though the police behaved abnormally, because it would have been very easy for them to put handcuffs on her, stand her up and put her back into the van. They kept her down long enough for me to take six or seven frames.

After she was finally stood up and put back in the van, and several other people went in the van, I looked over at Rosalba and Elli Say, my two friends from Columbia, and they were stunned by this. These are people who have suffered terrible deprivations in their own country, who are touring our country, telling how bad it is in Columbia, and all of a sudden they're witnessing similar treatment here. They were just stunned by this. Rosalba was weeping and trembling, and Elli was speechless. I asked them if they were alright, and they didn't respond, they just watched these people being abused by the police. Rosalba later told me it brought back memories of when she was run out of her village in Columbia. That was a shocker for me because I am involved in both struggles, that are quite different, but the results are no less tragic or troublesome to me.

Freedom

One thing about that day, that we activists are used to, but is nevertheless in shocking contrast to the supposed values of this country, is that the approach that the police took was a military strategic one. Here you have citizens of a country, in fact doing the "right" thing, going to the Capitol to express our discontent with something. The police take advantage of the fact that we were away from our "base," to come in and "attack." It's ironic, and might surprise a few people.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Jim Anderson

The Spirit Ride

The spirit ride was Jay Redhawk's idea. At first I thought he was nuts, but we went down and talked to Chris Leith about it ... Jay had been out [to Arvil Lookinghorse's place] before, and he was pretty familiar with the family. Chris called out there, and asked if we could come out there and see them, kind of told them a little bit about what was going on.

We hopped in the van, six or eight of us went down there. I took my little pipe. Arvil's brother had sweat for us, and took us to the Buffalo Calf house, and we were able to fill our pipes and go in and pray on the bundle.

Arvil came home the next day, and I filled my pipe again and told him all that was happening in Minneapolis and at these sites, and he took the pipe and smoked it, and said, "I'll help you. I'll come there and do this."

It was really strange, because a week before the ride we talked to Darryl Noheart and asked him to design a T-shirt for us. On this T-shirt there were eight riders with their staffs, and it happened to be that the ride ended up with eight riders. We brought the horses down to Birch Coulee, in Minnesota. That was a place where the Dakota had won a significant battle in 1862. We didn't want to ride for weeks and weeks, but we wanted to make a statement, so we went from Birch Coulee, maybe 100 miles, and it took us four days to do it.

One night, around 5:00 in the afternoon, we were riding by this farmer's land, in the ditch, and he came flying out with his truck and tried to push us off his land with his truck, yelling, "Get your god damn horses off my land, you didn't ask permission ..." We were like, "Hey, you get off our land, pal." Just after that we were about to load the horses up, and this [other] farmer came up to us and said, "Hey, could I put your horses up for the night?" It was right where we were stopping. That was awesome.

Then we rode from there to Shakopee, to the casino. We had talked to Art Owens and he said he would set it up with the Prescotts, to get us rooms and a place to put the horses. Well, when we got there, nothing was there. We had like 30 people with us, it was getting dark, we didn't have anything to eat, nowhere to store the horses... I was kind of dumbfounded. I went up there and they said, "We don't have any record of this. You have to call Mrs. Prescott." I called her, and we had the rooms. Then I talked to the treasurer at the time, and she said that they would give us $600 to board the horses. I talked to the guy at the boarding area a little bit, told him what we were up to, and instead of $600 for eight horses, he charged me $45.

We got into Minneapolis here, and had a ceremony on top of Pilot Knob hill, right there (points). Of course as we were performing the pipe ceremony there with the horses there were two eagles that came and circled right around us. We knew then, again, that we were doing the right thing.

They rode their horses across the Mendota bridge over to the fort, and of course the fort was locked to Indian people like it always is, so we couldn't do what we wanted to, which was bring them in there and show that we were coming back. That didn't work out, so we went over and boarded the horses right at camp. We made a makeshift corral there.

I remember that night the police first seen the horses, and all of a sudden there was like ten squad cars there. The guy says, "You don't have permits for those horses." So I pulled out the treaty of 1805, and said, "If you read this, we have a permit for these horses." "I'll get back to you," he says. He calls his superior, comes back and says, "OK, I guess you can have the horses here, as long as you have them out of here when you're done." (Laughs) It was pretty awesome, the things that happen when you do the right thing.

Debbra

I was born in 1950, I'm 52 years old at this time. At camp I was known as Madame D. When I originally heard about the camp, it was [from] a friend of mine, who was an activist connected with Heart of the Beast. He kept telling me there was going to be an occupation by a group of people, concerning the destruction of sacred property, a sacred site known as Camp Coldwater Springs. We knew it to be the birthplace and sacred grounds of the Dakota Nation.

I mosied down there, [and] the first person I met was Jay Redhawk, who was extremely offensive and negative, and made derogatory comments to my daughter. Then I connected with Thunder. I asked what could I do, and let him know that my background was as a nonviolent trainer in the 70s, that I had been trained by the Weather Underground, and had done occupations at Seaburg, New Hampshire, and Comanche Peak Nuclear

Power Plant. I was a part of the nonviolent movement, did a lot of civil disobedience and found it not to work. So we took it another step and developed something called nonviolent guerilla occupation, and yes, we did property damage, and certain subversive things.

So I knew that I had certain skills, and I had asked Thunder some of the things he might need, media outreach … I was also at the time a music promoter and had good organizing skills.

[Thunder] let me know the one thing they didn't have at the time was ice. It was a very hot time and there was no electricity at the site. So my friend and I found it interesting that in my tradition, the women bear the water. So we were buying spring water and freezing it in gallon containers, so that it could be used as ice and then consumed as water.

Suspicious behavior

Then we had the unity ride. At the time of the unity ride, we were asked by Jim Anderson to take on, as he called it, feeding his warriors, because they ate meat. So we started making the meals for the unity ride, and that's when I become suspicious of the young woman who was always there and in people's face, called Teresa.

At one point it was extremely cold, this was November, and we were cooking this gigantic dinner of wild rice chicken soup. No one knew where we were, we were in an undisclosed location, and she called there. She told us not to bring the soup, it wasn't needed, the riders had been taken care of. I had a suspicion, and I told her I would take my direction from Jimmy, that he should call and tell me not to bring it.

So I became a little suspicious of her. At one point, she had a little bucket that had cleaning supplies. She decided that she was cleaning, but after she came out of everybody's bedroom, all the supplies were in the same place, all the sponges were dry, none of the chemicals were gone from the bottles, so people were suspicious that she was rummaging and collecting information.

There was never a concrete knowledge that she was undercover. However, the night of the raid, she disappeared, and somebody saw her in town a few days later, and the first thing out of her mouth was, "Because I disappeared I hope you don't think I'm a narc." She never came around after that.

Cassandra

I was known as Cassandra. I was a freshman at South. The first time I went down there, we drove down that little road by the houses. We circled back and stopped. There was a table set up with information. It had Susu's picture of a bur oak. Jay Redhawk was there, and he started telling us about trees, and how they were trying to cut them down and put in a road. I was like, "Can't you just spike them?" He was like, "Well, think about it. A tree is a living thing. If you were to take a nail and pound it through your arm, wouldn't it hurt?" I was like, "Yeah…?", but it was a matter of saving the trees.

I'm a nature freak. Our first house had woods in the back yard, and I played in them all my life. I'm like, don't cut down any trees if you don't have to. It was totally unnecessary. I was all for keeping the trees up. Whether it was sacred or not, it was a pointless road.

The only thing that bothered me was, some people would say, "I'm a vegetarian. I'm a vegan. How dare you eat meat around me?!" Then whenever I would say, "Yeah, I don't eat meat," people would say, "Oh, one of those." I was like, "No! Not one of those …"

Aaron Wenger

My name is Aaron Wenger. I arrived at the Minnehaha Free State a couple weeks before Thanksgiving, in November of 1998. I remember at Thanksgiving someone interviewed me, with a video camera, and asked, "Why are you here?" I just laughed, because that wasn't a coherent thought in my mind. I felt drawn there by different things. One thing was my cousin, Methane, who had been there and told me intriguing stories, about witches, and police, and the falls, all kinds of cool stuff.

I had been working as a computer programmer in Pennsylvania, but had left my job after reading Tom Brown's Guide to Wilderness Survival.

It became quite clear to me that I wanted to be part of the effort to preserve that area. It was almost an intellectual acknowledgment of the importance, I didn't have a real emotional attachment to the place like some people did, but I knew that it was important. Springs are so important and I knew that was vital. The trees and the road I didn't know. I talked to one person who said there were a lot of accidents at that one turn, there's always two sides …

I stayed there almost continuously for a year and a half, went home for Christmas after the December 20th raid. A lot of the time was just spent chopping wood or cleaning the kitchen. During the winter it was really cold, so you'd sleep as long as you could. Then you'd get up and try to get your feet warm right away. I found it was important to warm up my feet before they went in the boots. (I had those smurf boots, big white army surplus rubber things.) Then I'd go scrounging for food, about ten times a day, scavenging. Cutting wood, like I mentioned. It's all kind of a blur. I spent so much time there, but didn't really do much. I don't even think I did my share of the cleaning. It was just occupying, and steeling yourself against any possible outcome. Thinking about it or not, it was a drain, in some ways.

I remember the Star Lodge, Swaney would wake me up at eight or nine, and he'd start up his chain saw! (Laughs) A lot of people didn't like it, because it had that negative association with cutting down trees. He apparently didn't have that. I went out a couple times with him to collect pallets, loading three or four at a time on to his minivan.

Pooping in the woods was memorable. I don't want to talk about that.

I got to know Jessica, who is a very important person in my life now. We're going to be friends for a long, long time.

I was up in a net on the coldest night in the winter. It was 20 below. I had my 50 below sleeping bag. I was sleeping, with all my clothes and my smurf boots on, totally zipped up in the mummy bag. I heard later that you're actually warmer if you're naked, but the question is, when you're in a net, how do you get naked? And how do you keep your clothes warm in the meantime?

[We slept up there because] we wanted security in case of a nighttime raid. Why that night? I guess we just wanted to get used to doing it, have a routine, make use of the nets we put up.

We had Earth First! meetings, morning circle, emergency strategy meetings, and the weekly meetings at the Gathering Grounds. I went to a lot of those. There were several different factions competing for dominance. The Stop the Reroute people, the camp people, the Native people, all had their different ways of looking at things.

One thing that came up: people in the camp wanted people to stop driving into the camp, to park out on the road. The Native people, from what I could gather, had the attitude that this was not a battle to expend energy on. I can't remember exactly, but there was some infighting about that.

Then there were the pagans, Paul and Jessica ... I met Paul doing security, and we talked. He's really intriguing. One time I remember he was giving offerings to the Little People at a hollow tree, and I remember thinking, 'This person knows things I don't know, or believes things I don't believe.' I tried for a while to believe some of those things, and some of them I do, but many I still don't.

Morning circle was a very cool thing. The only problem was that people were tired in the morning, from doing overnight security. Most people, at some point between midnight and eight in the morning, [did a shift]. But the circles were good, they did a lot for community, strategy, communication ... anything and everything got talked about, what we were going to do that day ... If we didn't have those meetings, it would have been hard to work together and know why each other were doing things. Giving everyone an opportunity to speak builds character in everyone that isn't used to having that opportunity.

The Earth First! meetings didn't have factions, but there were still competing personalities. One really intense meeting I remember, we were talking about whether or not to let the media into the houses to see the lockdowns, to get the concept out there [and show] that it wasn't dangerous. That would have been a good idea.

I felt drawn to the Free State to do something for the earth. Some of the same reasons I left my job, I felt pushed, and pulled. It was like a long period of meditation where I was shedding layers of my former self in order to build something new. I've since shed the things that I built again.

Kevin

Well, I guess this is pretty funny: the first day I was there, I got there at night, didn't really know what was going on, didn't know what it looked like or anything. The next day there was a march on the capital and that was the first raid on Minnehaha, when they came to take the power and the gas from our houses. So me being there for 12 hours, I was then locked to a huge barrel with Austin, which was also a very controversial thing, because I was in the all women's house, but there wasn't any woman to do it. So I did it. That was the beginning of my stay. It just built and built, it was pretty amazing …

* * *

This was in November of '98, old Free State. There was this huge methane pile that was happening, where the new Free State [eventually] was. It started on fire really bad, and the whole block that we were on, and probably six or seven other living quarter blocks, were full of nasty smoke. The fire departments from Minneapolis, St. Paul and the suburbs came, screaming as if we lit the houses on fire or something. The head of the fire department came up. I just looked at him and said, "It's over there, man! It's your pile of wood chips!" He just looked at me and was like, "It's none of your business anyway renh, renh, renh ..." and drove away. People were freaking out, jumping on the roofs; we thought we were getting raided.

Keith

It was late fall in 1998, before the houses were demolished and after the utility raid. Since the utility raid, the water had been turned off at every house except for Carol's house and the Kitchen House. Folks were only using the bathroom in the Kitchen House, or so I thought.

Anyway, we were getting settled in for the long haul over the wintertime. My friend Kevin and I were working to get the houses prepared for the winter. One of the tasks was bucket flushing the toilets to flush out the pipes so that they wouldn't freeze and burst. We had four houses to prepare. The first two were near main camp, and they went fine. The last two were separated from camp. They mainly accommodated a few random squatters and some punks.

Everything was going fine with the flushing until the second to last house. We hauled our buckets upstairs, looked at the toilet, and discovered that, despite the house's semi-regular use, no one ever flushed the toilet and it was almost overflowing with shit. Fortunately, after some careful pouring, we were able to flush the toilet.

Margerie

My name's Margerie Otto, and I'm 51 years old. By the time I was involved in the Free State, I had left Corporate America, for about two years, and was reforming my ideas and thinking, and life. My connection with camp started in a very small way, but it became a big part of that reformation.

I live in a big house, in Edina, Minnesota, a very wealthy suburb, so one thing I could do to help camp was to allow people to shower, and sleep if they were sick … it was one part of the support the camp had, the resources from my previous life. I am a mother of two sons, the oldest in college, and the youngest, who spent a lot of time at camp. He still remembers it. It was a big part of his life. We still visit the spring.

My stories would be about what attracted me to that place and community and held me there, despite the police state and other things that would normally dissuade people from being involved.

So I'd seen flyers and articles, but what made me go down at first was this multi-cultural calendar that I had been putting together and sending out every week. I said to myself, "Well, I don't know whether to put this down on my calendar or not, I better go check it out." Research, officially. I came down on the four-month anniversary of camp, December 10th. I brought my then 6-year-old son Richard, and we brought some food. We were greeted at the front, and Marlin offered to guide us around.

The wisdom of children

We went down to the river, and Richard said, "We should say a prayer," and me and Marlin said, "OK…" So Richard said the prayer about keeping this place, not having it be destroyed, and thank you for the river … How a child picked up so quickly that this was a place where you pray! I'd never heard him pray in public before. So that gave me a clue …

Then we went back and saw the houses, and had some food. The whole atmosphere reminded me of a place that I love, called Holden Village, in the Cascade Mountains of Washington. It had that same sense of timelessness, full presence to children and to each other, and the ease of assuming that everything that is supposed to fall in place, will fall in place. It seemed like a retreat place, kind of set apart from the rest of the world, a whole different culture, feeling, spirit.

* * *

That camp was destroyed before I saw it again. Once the new camp had been set up, I wasn't sure how much I wanted to be involved. I wasn't sure whether the camp was going to reform, or who would come back, or how it would be restructured.

When I got there the first time, the fire was in the circle of the Four Trees. Someone there actually showed me how to enter the space and left me there respectfully. That was an amazing experience, because I felt very enveloped, held by that circle around me, that circle of everything they had ever seen, their history. And here I could just step into it, and offer whatever was troubling me, or a celebration, and add it to that world, that history. Whatever I was struggling with was probably something that history had struggled with, a lot, and that was comforting, to know I was in the presence of all that, that there's some bigger world there. So that first experience, of praying inside those trees, committed me to coming back! The Four Trees became my sanctuary for those years. It was one place I felt very heard, and responded to, which is one thing I struggle with. A huge part of this was being able to be outside, feel the wind and the sun and the snow and the mosquitoes.

As far as getting involved, one thing I noticed, I think this might be a Native American culture thing, was that the community consists of everyone's gifts, everyone brings things to the circle to make it complete, and so there's kind of an obligation of people to say what the needs of the group are, so that the person can offer the gifts. Bear was really good at saying "What we need today is ..." He wouldn't ask me, that would be too direct. He would say, like, "I think they would make us coffee if someone would go pick it up." That's all that would be said, and yet it was an invitation to join the community, to offer your gifts to the circle. That's a skill, having grown up so-called white, that I had not developed; giving people courage to take part, and express themselves. It was a very empowering thing, to have your gifts revealed to you if you didn't know what they were, to have them affirmed, accepted, and have there be no pressure to create gifts that you don't have. So it was very easy for me, once I spent some time in the trees, to find a way to be involved, to say, "Yes" to things.

I want to mention the people! They were so funny and so wonderful and so reflective on what the state of America and the world are, and always struggling to understand it better, be more clear about where oppressions come from and how to dismantle them, and very excitable ... I was impressed.

I've seen it in very old people, that they live their lives on the assumption that whatever is supposed to come will come, and they give up the grasping, trying to structure and make things happen... But I've never seen young people do that in such a complete way, that a whole day will be lived on that basis, the whole community grounded on that assumption. I've lived in other experiences where things flowed like that, but they were always very brief, like on vacation, then you come back and life is still how it was before. This is the first time I've really lived like that, for over a year. I don't know how it got to be that way, but it was a true thing.

A strong message

One time I was just sitting along the edge of the pool at the spring, in a really sad and forlorn state of mind. It was getting towards the end and not looking hopeful, and I was wondering, 'What's it all about?' which I'm sure we all wondered. So I was sitting with my knees tucked up, looking at the water, and suddenly, silently, maybe a little bit gradually but quickly, the water changed into these bursts of light. And this profound, cosmic silence that sometimes settles over me, or maybe the whole world, came to that place. So instead of seeing water there were these minuscule eruptions, these bubbles of light that would burst and open, kind of like fireworks but more solid. I looked down at the grass, and the dragonfly on my shoe, 'I'm still in reality, I'm not crazy,' and I looked back at the water and it was still cosmic silence and bursts of light. I think it would have gone on as long as I sat there, but I finally said thank you and left. I was thinking I didn't know what to do with this quite yet.

So that answered my sadness, worrying and wondering, 'Am I crazy, or is there really something sacred about this place?' I guess whenever I got in a really hard place of not knowing whether I should be there, or what I should be doing, there was a response. There was a walk that I took where I stood eye to eye with an eagle sitting about ten feet away, for a really long time. I felt heard and held and responded to in a way that I can't find anywhere else, or anyway nowhere I can drive to in 20 minutes.

Madeline Gardner

My family has always lived here in the Twin Cities, and I'd been down to Minnehaha Park quite a few times. It's a really beautiful place. I'd hang out down by the river all the time as a kid, go on walks with my dad ...

When I first went to the Free State, I was 16 and a junior in high school. I had been hearing about it, for quite a few months, because my dad always cut out articles in the paper, of interest, and he would show me, but I didn't pay too much attention to it.

[Then one day] I went to the Free State with two friends of mine from high school. We didn't want to go without bringing something, so I brought candles I had been collecting since I was a little kid; I had hundreds of them! I had heard that they needed candles down there, they had no electricity. We went down there, and I just walked up to the first person I saw and handed him the box. I think it was Bear, and he said something like, "Oh yeah, this is good!" and took them away without much of a thank you or anything. I was really nervous, all these people, you know, Native folks with feathers, and crusty hippie kids ... I felt very young and intimidated.

I think Caleb came up to me and started talking, rambling on about what he had done that day. I was glad to be welcomed. He asked our names, and then he asked us if we had ever been in a tipi. I said no.

and I'm sure my eyes must have just lit up ... As a kid, I'd always wished that I'd grown up, you know, 500 years ago, in a tribe or something, and had really been intrigued by Native folks.

So we followed Caleb into a tipi, and we all sat down. There was this man there, Wally. We all sat in there for probably two hours... there was a little fire, and there was hay on the floor, mattresses. Wally told us story after story... stuff from when he was a kid, or stories that he had been told by various elders. I was so, I can't even find the word, enthralled maybe, just overwhelmed with the joy of the moment, like "Wow, look what I've found, this precious jewel!" I went home and told my parents, "You won't believe what happened!!" Then after that I would go down there as much as I could, and wash dishes and sit and watch people.

Those first couple months when I was exposed to the Free State and everything around it, was an awakening time for me, starting to see the world in a different way. I 'd had suspicions for a long time, of certain things, and they really started to be affirmed in a more concrete way.

Lies

Suddenly I realized
That everyone was telling lies
They tried to call it civilized
But I could see behind their eyes
A sadness caught me by surprise

No longer fooled by their disguise
I took the leap, to empathize

Guided by the passing skies
And some things old, and all things wise
I'll wind and wander through the lies
Weaving rope and making ties

Perhaps one day, before hope dies
We'll shed the things that we despise
And then our spirits will arise
And never again believe the lies.

-Freedom

THEORY OF MOTIVATION
#3

Dick Bancroft

The occupation was not military, but the police response was. The occupation was a peaceful resistance with creativity, ideas, living in the trees, Santa Claus on the chimney. But the police overreact, and come on hard-nosed with weaponry, chemicals, night vision glasses… It's almost like they were rehearsing for a bigger event.

Henry Fieldseth

I didn't get this belief until after the current September 11th, but I believe that what happened to us on December 20th of 1998 was practice for the event that there's terrorists in Minneapolis that we have to deal with. "We can practice on these nonviolent, peaceful hippies, they're not going to hurt us, and we can learn how to do it."

I think that the foot soldiers were deceived. I think that the pep rally that happened out at the airport for six hours before they raided us, that was to get them all hyped up. They were telling the cops who raided us that we had weapons, that we were gonna take some of them out in the process, that we had booby traps, that were gonna kill them … They raided us with the fervor that one would expect, given that kind of information.

CHAPTER NINE

The Raid on the Houses:

December 20th, 1998

The raid, I don't know what people were expecting. I don't remember what I was expecting. We weren't expecting that, or anything like that.

-Natalia

You know what I noticed? It used to say on the police cars, "To serve and to protect." It was during that span of time that I noticed it was removed. That still concerns me.

-Sister Jane McDonald

So, I call up the governor's office, and I tell them what I think about this: "It's state land. The governor needs to protect it by keeping people off of it? How ironic! Doesn't it belong to the people? Or are we a police state? If the governor can't say, 'Come, let us reason together, let us bring people to the table together,' then he isn't doing his job. Thank you."

-Jan Dalsin

Leslie Kaup

In court, I was calm. It was strange being on the other side of the glass, seeing the courtroom packed with people I knew. Garrett kept holding up a sign, trying to communicate something to me, but I couldn't make out what it said. He and Bill were wearing Earth First! shirts—they looked exhausted.

All I had wanted was to go home for the holiday, to take a few days of refuge. I wasn't sure if they'd let me out in time. I thought maybe I'd stay in for several days, pushing for a speedy trial, refusing to sign their conditional release which banned me from the area of the highway occupation.

But in the end, with the urging of my lawyer, I broke down. I wasn't thinking clearly; I was traumatized from the morning before, and just wanted out. I had just seen the ugliness of authority: the assault weapons, the infrared sensors on helicopters to catch people running through the woods, a force of 802 cops to arrest 38 of us. I signed, with the understanding that I would be back in jail if I went near my home of the last four months, or what was left of it. Several hours later, I was released.

More than 36 hours before, around 2 a.m. on Sunday, December 20, 1998, I had lain awake with paranoia in the living room of the North House. A punk high school kid named Dirty came rushing in, shouting. Someone had seen the stream of police cars coming from the airport. Parts of highways 62 and 55 were closed. I called to the women in the barricaded room: The raid is coming, get ready. Be careful. I'll be right outside your window.

I emerged from the house to softly falling snow, to Bill on his cell phone, trying to call people to the site. I threw my sleeping bag in my car, pulled on the grey winter coat I hadn't felt the need to wear before that night, and waited, my empty stomach churning.

Nearly two hours passed before the Ryder trucks pulled up. At one point, I walked down the block to use the still-functioning bathroom in the Coffee House. Bill reminded me to hurry, to not get stuck inside a building. As I walked between houses, I looked up to see doughnuts strung from a cargo net.

I hurried back to the North House. Carol, the woman who started it all by refusing to give up her home of 40 years to make way for a highway, stood in the yard. Her tiny body shivered against the winter; she wore a white hand-knit scarf on her head, and thin shoes that wouldn't keep her feet warm for long. She was talking through the open side window to the barricaded women, Austin and Tarzana, encouraging them to be strong.

She had moved out of her home 11 days before. Her husband, Al, might not have survived the trauma of December 20. She had to take care of him, and herself.

The police had the event catered, I later found out. Coffee was served out of golf carts as they warmed themselves over the seven bonfires along the old train tracks; they piled the fires high with our belongings and bits of the bulldozed houses. They spent about $400,000 on the raid; about $10,000 per arrest.

I had just put on an extra pair of fleece socks when the cops arrived. I didn't understand the Ryder trucks, at first. But when the truck pulled up into the yard, the back door flew up and the troops stormed out, I barely had time to react. I rushed toward them, begging them to be careful. One of them turned around, gun pointed, yelling at me to get down. They broke down the door to the house I was supposed to be protecting, to get into the barricaded women inside.

One man, from the Hennepin County Sheriff's Department, took a closer look at Cricket and me, told us to follow him around to the back of the house. From there, I could see the frenzy of lights inside, flashlights searching for a way into the barricaded room. At one point, I asked the man who led us back there if I could just stand by the window. He said I'd be safer back there, next to a fallen tree branch—where we had held a women's circle months before. When I saw the lights go out, I knew Austin and Tarzana had given up.

Whenever a cop walked by and asked who Cricket and I were, the sheriff's deputy said, "You know, the two in the pictures. The two in the pictures they showed us this morning." I was confused, thinking that maybe they had pictures of who lived in each house. It took a while for me to figure it out; he thought we were the informants for the cops. Our paranoia had been real.

I played along, asking where we would be taken after the raid. Surprised, he said, "Well, if you want, we can take you downtown and book you with everyone else so the others don't get mad." I asked what would happen to the houses. He told me they would be leveled. I couldn't quite believe him. I gazed down the row of houses, trying to imagine them gone, trying to picture the new landscape. I wondered if they would level the trees, too.

Another cop walked by and asked who we were. After hearing the standard reply about the picture, the cop asked, "Are you sure?" At that, we were shoved to the frozen, snow-covered ground. I landed hard on my right shoulder; it hasn't been the same since.

The cops discussed the situation, then searched us for ID. They looked at Cricket more closely, and decided he definitely wasn't "the one." Not until they pulled the stocking cap off to reveal my long dark hair were they sure I wasn't who they thought I was. I lay there for a while, growing colder, until they half-walked, half-dragged me to a police van. They opened up the back doors, and I was shoved into one side, Cricket into the other. I sat on the hard bench, grateful at least for a little heat.

On the other side of the cage, where the men were stacked, was a Native American activist from Oklahoma named Michael Haney. He had wriggled out of his cuffs and was on his cell phone, calling friends and family to get the word out that the raid was underway. In a couple minutes, they brought in the women who had been barricaded in the house. Tarzana thought her nose was broken—they had shoved her head back to pepper spray her face. Austin had also been pepper sprayed in the face. They both sat on the cold ground, soaked with the water the cops had dumped over them to rinse off the chemicals, for about half an hour before being brought to the wagon.

Tarzana was hysterical; I thought she was going to hyperventilate. She kept repeating, "I can't see, I can't see a thing." I got her to sing Caleb's song of stoppin' that highway and pagan chants that Starhawk had taught us, to calm her down. "If I was an Earth First!er, I'll tell you what I'd do: I would lock right down, and that road would not go through . . . I am a strong woman, I am a story woman, I am a healer and my soul will never die."

Austin had mucus hanging from her mouth and nose, a reaction from the chemicals and the cold. I raised my knee to her face so she could wipe it on my pant leg; we were all handcuffed behind our backs. She could barely open her eyes; when she did, they were brilliant blue, unlike their usual grey.

It was nearly light out by the time we got to the jail. I was uncuffed so that I could change into jail clothes. For some reason, they let me keep my shirt on; I just had to wear the pants and flip-flops. The cop booking me was amazed at the number of layers I was wearing. While I was changing behind a divider, they began booking Henry, whom I had never met. His eyes stared blankly ahead, his bushy beard damp from pepper spray, and he calmly kept telling them, "I can't see."

I spent most of the day in holding cells, always with women I knew. I heard stories of the morning, saw the gashes on Meghan's wrists from the handcuffs, and felt the sting of pepper spray on my cheek when I hugged her. Natalia told me that they had swabbed some kind of pepper gel into her eyes as they propped them open; that they had beaten Mike with a stick, so he could barely walk. I saw Kevin in the hallway, with his forehead bandaged. And Sin, who had been pepper sprayed after being handcuffed, reacted to the chemicals and broke out in hives all over her body. She begged for a shower for hours before they listened.

We all eventually were taken upstairs for the night. But instead of being in "population," Pepperwolf, Rachel and I were placed in what the guards called "women's special": three single cells connected by a wide hallway, with television, collect-call phone, and showers at the far end. I hoarded tiny paper request slips and pencils in my cell, wanting to write but unable to. I slept despite the bright lights, on the hard cot with only a sheet to warm me. I'm allergic to their wool blankets.

We watched the news that evening; saw, on four different channels, the houses bulldozed. I saw someone, dressed as Santa Claus, locked into the chimney of the ABC House, with helicopters hovering over him, trying to scare him into submission. And after they got him down, the bulldozers ramming into the house, cutting through the banner which hung over the front, a painting reminiscent of Tiananmen Square: a single figure, standing up to the tanks. The banner read, "The People Will Prevail." Whenever I see that famous photo, I see again the destruction of those houses.

That evening, they called me out of the cell, led me down the hall, and said I was being released. Then they set a piece of paper in front of me, the dreaded conditional release form. If I signed that form, I agreed to stay away from the land until my hearing, in 30 days. I refused, and asked to be taken back to my cell.

Later, they called me out again to say I had a visitor. Bill sat on the opposite side of the glass, his ear to the phone, straining to hear my voice. He described the emergency meeting at the Bedlam Theatre that night; over 100 people showed up. I told him I had court the next morning. I assured him I was fine, but that I wasn't drinking or eating. I knew many others were also fasting, in a kind of jail solidarity. After our 15 minutes together, separated by glass, I took a couple sips of water. It tasted like fluoride toothpaste. I didn't drink any more.

As frantic as I was to get out, I felt safe in that cell. After the violent morning, I felt there was nothing more they could do to me. I was more free in that locked cell than I had been hours before, standing guard over our community, unable to sleep or eat, frozen with fear. At least in jail, I knew they wouldn't destroy their own building to get to me. The night before, in the North House, I wasn't so sure.

The next morning, after a full night's sleep, I was called on for court. We were led through the hallways, collecting other inmates as we went. They didn't have enough handcuffs for everyone, so I was told to just hold my wrists together as if they were bound. We waited, shivering, in a holding cell beneath the city, in the tunnels between the jail and the courthouse. One woman had smuggled a sheet under her clothes, but they took it away. Women argued, yelled, complained about the cold and the long hours and the people around them. Many of them seemed to know each other.

After an hour or so, we were led to another cell, just outside the courtroom. I waited for four hours before being called again. In the meantime, the other women were getting curious, wondering what a bunch of "white girls" were doing in jail. Pepper and Rachel and I talked to them about the raid, the 800 cops, the kicking in of the sacred drum, the four months of occupying the houses. How we would do it all over again. And these women were proud of us. They vowed to help, if they got out.

I tried, that afternoon, to drink the juice of an orange. Partially peeling it, I started to squeeze the juice into a cup. But the pesticide smell overpowered me. I threw it in the trash, along with the meat sandwiches.

When I told the guard not to bother bringing any more food for me, she asked for my name, said she'd make a note of that. Her tone of voice was threatening, but I was already on my way out. It was just a matter of hours.

I was coughing when I got out, my head full, lungs tight and belly empty. My head, my muscles ached from dehydration.

When I was released and collapsed into the arms of those who love me, they gave me chocolate soymilk and pistachios and sourdough bread. We had a party in the hallway of the jail all night, as people were released. Sunshine massaged my shoulder and hugged me, walking me down the hallways. Bill drove me to the impound lot to get my car, which had been legally parked, and it was there that I realized my driver's license was missing.

One week later I walked through the ruins of the Free State with Bill. With the houses gone, all the trees still standing, and a layer of snow covering the scars, it looked like part of Minnehaha Park, as if no humans had ever lived there. I walked through the garden, through the broken bits of glass and wood where the cold frames had sat. I clawed through the snow for any sign of life, and found the ornamental strawberry plant, still green.

Ben Tsai

So the next thing I'll talk about is the raid. I'll start a little before the raid, because I actually remember giving a tour to two people named Cat and Dog. At that point there were a lot of people coming in, so it wasn't anything unusual. The names were kind of geeky. I thought, 'Try a little harder.' That was the only time I saw them. It was way too busy to be doing what we should have been security wise.

At that point with new people, we would tell them why we were there, a little of what we had done, that we were nonviolent: "No weapons, no alcohol, no drugs, no violence." We had signs up all over saying that. We'd give a little idea of areas we needed help with. We told them general things. People knew where the lockdowns were, but they weren't allowed in those houses. [Cat and Dog's] attitude was pretty normal. They expressed interest, were kind of quiet, didn't talk a lot, didn't stand out. They expressed interest, but just listened. They were neutral, moderately attentive. They looked in their mid-late 20s, dressed nondescript in dark, normal clothes, maybe black jeans and a sweater. I seem to remember Dog had thick black plastic glasses. They looked on the edge of nondescript punk rock, dressed down, casual, a lot like I dress sometimes.

It never was [completely confirmed that they were undercovers]. To me there are several points. They were there on and off up to the raid, for a couple weeks. People saw them that night at the Free State. They came into one of the garages where there was a lockdown and talked to the person there. I think the person was asking for support or something, and they totally ditched out and left, disappeared. No one saw them after that.

So what happened was me and Leslie were doing support up by the North House. We were hanging out, we knew the cops were coming. It was dark and snowing, and all of a sudden this Ryder truck pulls around the corner, and then another, and another … We were like, "This is not normal. This is not some moving party or something." I didn't expect to see Ryder trucks.

The first one barreled by, the second one slammed on its brakes at our place. The back door goes up, and a black clad platoon tumbles out the back, falling over each other and shit. So we're telling them the deal, "This is a nonviolent camp, we're peaceful. There are people in the house. They're locked down, they're peaceful, don't hurt them. This is a peaceful protest." They totally ignore us. They fucking barrel by us and start battering the door down with a battering ram. That was the swat team, they were very focused.

So we were like, "Fuck." Of course there were cops all around at this point. So some cops approach us and say, "Hey, how's it going," being really casual. We gave them the same spiel, "There are people in this house …" So we were giving them information, and I think because that was our first contact … this is speculation … they didn't arrest us, this one cop. So we're hanging out and talking very casual, I thought, 'OK, this is … weird.' Finally this other cop comes up to us and is like, "Who are these people? Why aren't they in cuffs?" The first cop says, "What do you mean, aren't these the two?" The other cop says, "What? These aren't the people in the photographs! You need to arrest these people." So they put us in cuffs and put us face down in the snow.

It was totally confusing, like, 'OK, what just happened?' The comment about photographs was the key. The photographs were passed out, to the cops, seemingly for people not to be arrested. Who would not be arrested? Undercover cops. So go back. Me and Leslie kind of look the same [as Cat and Dog]; dark, glasses, medium height, medium build, man and woman, short hair and long hair. So that, and them ditching out on that person, they were not arrested, not in jail, no one ever heard from them again. It all just adds up.

Henry Fieldseth

My name is Henry Fieldseth, and I grew up in Minnesota. I was born in a little town up north. I've been concerned about environmental issues my whole life, I've been active on issues since the 70s. Graduated from high school in 1975 and came down to Minneapolis.

So when this highway was coming through and threatening all these trees that were part of Minnehaha Park, I met some Earth First! people at the Seward Cafe and I said, "There's these ancient oak trees right here in the Twin Cities, you've got to move to them!" I didn't think that offhand comment would follow through, and maybe it had nothing to do with it…

I came on August 10th, because there was an event, and I was really moved by all these young people who were willing to put themselves in these incredibly uncomfortable and life-compromising positions, to protect the trees, but I never got involved more than just coming when there was an event.

Then I got a phone call on Saturday the 19th of December, 1998, and it was that the raid is really gonna be tonight and we need people to show up, and I showed up around midnight. I'd gotten calls before and not responded to them, but somehow I knew that this was real, and I went.

I was immediately struck by how quiet it was. There were just no cops or anything around. There wasn't any staging going on within a reasonably visible range, it was just uncanny how quiet it was.

There was a small group of us, very few people ... There were a few people sleeping in the houses and just a few of us outside of the houses. Carol Kratz gave me a tour of her house. She showed me the woodwork that she had finished herself, and the floors and the ceilings that she had installed, and it was so incredibly powerful and then at the same time you knew that we weren't going to be able to stop this house from being bulldozed at this point.

Then we waited, it was hours. Somebody had been out in a car, I think it was Swaney. He pulled up about 3:30 and said, "It's happening. There's 53 State Troopers lined up along Cedar Avenue on the other side of the airport." We didn't understand that was just a small part of what they were putting together.

It took them an hour from that time to get there. They drove really, really slowly.

At 3:30 when we got the alert from Swaney, someone told me to wake the people up in the houses at the south end of the block. So I went into each house, found somebody, told them what I knew, and gave them the responsibility to wake the people up in that house. This didn't always work, because the person that I gave the message to had that jaded point of view, "Sure! I don't see any cops coming!" [There had been many false raid alerts in the preceding months.]

So Sam had made this steel tripod, three twenty-foot long steel pipes tied and stood up like a tipi, where he was suspended in a little seat with himself locked on to one or two of the tripod legs, and I remember being really struck by that back in August when he was there for weeks.

I knew I wanted to be supportive of him, and I asked him at one point if there was anything I could do. He said that he would like to have someone on the roof at his level that he could communicate with. There was a ladder right there so I climbed up on the roof and it was, when I climbed up, just starting to snow, and I sat on the roof for about an hour before the cops came. I had a blanket around me, I'm sitting on the peak of a gabled roof, and by the time the cops come there's an inch of snow there.

I am pretty helpful, because sitting on the roof I can see all the other people, who tend to be hanging out in front of the building that Santa Claus is on the chimney of, which is across a big vacant lot from us.

And then, they came from each end of the block at the same time. They came in big yellow Ryder trucks, without any police sirens, without their headlights on. They came pretty quickly, and I remember thinking, as I saw the first one come around the corner at the north end of the block, 'Well who'd be moving at this time of day?!' It didn't take long for them to pull up in front of all the houses, they backed the trucks up to each house, or pulled 'em up alongside in the street, and the doors went open as fast as you could imagine garage doors springing up. They just exploded! 30 men out of each of those trucks. There were seven trucks, one for each house.

When the vans came down Hiawatha, they were escorted by running foot soldiers carrying guns. Those foot soldiers moved into the perimeter outline ... they totally surrounded, at least the front and as much of the back as they could. Then there was this procession of cops following these seven vans, and they made an incredibly long parade, and at the very end of the parade was the media. So by the time the media got there, the whole police thing was all in force.

They had, as we know, undercover agents, and maps, and everything was really well planned out. Those men that jumped out of the back of those trucks, each one of them knew exactly what his job was, and ran to exactly where he was supposed to be to do what he was supposed to do, whether it was knock down people, or break windows and throw in tear gas, or smash the whatever. They all went straight to places. It was very well rehearsed.

To me, I'm up here on a roof, they're not messing with me at all, they're just doing all this stuff on the ground, they're totally ignoring the three of us who are up in the air. We have to watch our friends being brutalized!! It was worse being trapped up there, detached from it and seeing it all happen, than being down there and being brutalized by them. It was really hard. As you can see it still shakes me up a little bit.

So there were seven houses, and everybody had assignments. Right next to the tripod house there was the garden. That garden had little cold frames protecting green growing things that the community was eating. Because it was such a mild winter, under those cold frames there were still greens growing on December 20th, (it was the first real snowfall that morning), and I would guess that 50 cops bent over and shined their lights in those little things, and then walked away without smashing them. In retrospect I understand that they were looking for people locked down under those ... but they had enough respect for that green growing garden that was there not to smash it.

One thing was that as soon as they exploded out of the vans, windows started breaking. They broke windows in all the houses. I knew they wanted to get us out of the houses, but it's like, "Is breaking windows really helping?" Until the tear gas starts wafting up the chimney. Then it's like, "Oh. I know why they were breaking windows."

The cops that were planted at the first five houses all had something to keep them busy, like barricades, or lots of people to subdue and arrest… but at those last two houses they found nothing there at all. So pretty quickly there's a big crowd milling around under Sam's tripod, and looking up like they're ready for the kill. There are some cops who've been assigned to the tripod, and they are repeatedly telling all these cops milling around, "Don't worry about them, a cherry picker's coming to take care of them. Don't worry about them, a cherry picker's coming to take care of them."

There had been a ladder for me to get up there, but one of those

Earth First! people disappeared that ladder after I got up there, with my permission, so it wouldn't be so easy for them to get Sam down. But the police had their own ladders, and eventually the guys under the tripod who were saying, "Don't worry, a cherry-picker..." got totally outnumbered by the guys who wanted to go up there and deal with us.

So Sergeant Mosey and somebody else came up onto the roof. They asked me what I was doing and said that I was being a witness for my friend on the tripod, for whom I was very concerned. They said, "Are you gonna get down now?" and I said, "No, I just explained to you what I'm here about…"

So then they pulled my hat and glasses to the back of my head, and held a can of mace right in front of my eyes. They gave me a short amount of time to change my mind or something, and I just closed my eyes real tight. Then one by one they opened my eyes, and sprayed a stream of mace into each eye. That makes you blind and it really, really burns. Then I lay down on the roof. They keep spraying this stuff mostly in my nose and in my mouth, after my eyes are blind. It seems like it goes on for a really long time, and after some time I say something like, "I can't see, you can stop now." Those guys up on the roof were really quite rough and unfriendly with me.

There were 2 by 4s nailed to the roof so that roof-scamperers could climb around more easily. They kind of just shoved me down the roof where a third cop was standing at the top of a ladder, and that cop was actually nice, it felt like a human being... was aware that he was holding another human being. I felt that I was caught, and that this man was going to help me get down. I was quite terrified as I was getting to the edge of the roof, because I know the edge of the roof is coming, I don't see that there's a man there to catch me.

Then he very carefully brought me down the ladder and put me on the ground, and then I'm roughly manhandled across the yard. I'm kneeling with a group, and get collected enough to realize that I can open my eyes for just a split second. It's incredibly painful, but I get little strobe light views of the world. I was essentially blind for three hours with those little strobe light things, but every time you even get the littlest crack of open, the air gets in and makes it hurt a whole lot more. The policeman told me that it would go away in about 45 minutes. I didn't believe them, and it didn't.

Then they brought us to jail. We sat around in the van for quite some time. It turns out that the cop in the van knows me from some other circumstances. I hear the cop who knows me say to his friend cop, who's also in the van, "What are the chances that the one group of protesters that I have to arrest includes somebody who's a friend of a friend?"

I didn't understand what that meant when I heard that but the mutual friend later told me what the cop was saying: he was really disappointed that there was somebody that he knew in this group, because that limited the amount of violence that he could do, he could beat us up more if he didn't know any of us. "I really wish that your friend Henry hadn't been there, because I really wanted to bust heads, and I couldn't very well bust the head of your friend Henry."

Before the raid, I was only coming out when there was a specific call to bring the community out, but spraying mace in my eyes made me a much more staunch opponent. I became much more involved in what was going on at the encampment. That might not have happened, had they not sprayed mace in my eyes. To a certain extent, their strategy backfired, but if you think about it, there were a whole lot of little old ladies that didn't come around for months. It scared people away pretty much big time...

And it really did have an amazing effect on me; like, whenever I hear police sirens, there's a deep serious paranoia that happens in me that didn't happen before. It really hurts. I'm much more afraid of the police.

Natalia

We all prepared. I started out in the North House, then switched. The people who were living in the basement of the Kitchen House had been in there for like a month and a half. Finally they came out and announced that they were leaving town. So I offered to do [that lockdown].

It was a cool lockdown. There was this tiny hole cut in the floor of a coat closet, which went through the ceiling of the basement, which had a fireplace and a couch. The basement room was barricaded. They had this wall built out of concrete or plywood or something, where the door ought to have been. Then they had this pile of dirt that they got from digging the dragons, that was like ten feet high that covered the wall they had built. It was the best-barricaded lockdown in the camp. They thought they would be the last ones to go, that there would be some sort of standoff with the police trying to get in. In hindsight, this proved to be incredibly naive.

[The police] got into the barricade in about 30 seconds, with a battering ram. But then, nothing wound up happening like we thought it would.

I remember being down in the hole. I was really sick, had a really bad cold. I spent the two days before the raid sitting in the basement, sick, making grilled cheese sandwiches on the fireplace and reading…

Mike and I were inseparable. We were best friends, and eventually we hooked up. We had been together for like a week when the raid happened. He was planning on locking down to a roof, and I said, "I really want you to lock down with me, I don't feel safe by myself down there." He said, "We're gonna get our asses kicked down in that basement. But fine. I'll do it for you."

So we had our little nest down there. We had the radio, we had our field phone, but we kicked it over right before the raid. We were listening to the radio, Jimmy saying, "There's cops, as far as the eye can see." So we knew they were coming.

It was completely dark in there; the fire was coals, and we were locked down. We heard everything, breaking glass, people screaming, the cops being like, "Get down, get down," things breaking, tear gas going off. It was scary because we couldn't see anything, we could only hear what was going on. We heard them come into the house, stomping. They were really loud. They knew exactly how the lockdown was. They knew the entire structure of the lockdown, what it looked like, what it was made of, where everything was in the basement. They knew where the couch was in the basement. They knew everything. It was really obvious that there were undercovers, something going on. We heard a cop say, "Hey boss, there's this hole here, should I throw tear gas in it?," and the other one said, "No, you can't do that, they have gas masks." We were the only ones not to get teargassed, because they knew we had masks, which was fucked-up and scary.

So the one was like, "Should I go down there?" The other one said, "No, don't bother, we're gonna break through." Even then, we thought, 'It'll be OK, they can't get through our lockdown, our lockdown is great." They got through in 30 seconds, not even. BANG BANG, they were through, they were there. [On the radio], I heard Marshall coughing, saying, "Tear gas," I heard bad things happening to people on the radio, bad things happening to people outside.

The cops came, there were a few on me and a few on Mike, probably more standing as back up. They were like, "Hey, unlock yourselves, get out of here." We said, "What are you talking about, we can't unlock," and he said, "You're full of shit, you have your carabiner attached with a piece of chain to rebar ..." He explained to me the anatomy of our lockbox, which I really didn't need to know. I was like, 'What the fuck?! They know everything, what is going on?!'

First they tried pain compliance holds, but they were doing them wrong. I wasn't going to correct them, but I remember thinking that it was funny that they couldn't do it.

[So we didn't unlock,] and they broke out the pepper spray. The cop was like, "Hey, I have something I want to show you," and breaks out this package. Originally we thought it was gel, but in court we learned they just sprayed the spray onto their gloves, opened our eyes with one hand, and smeared the pepper spray onto our eyes with the other.

I was really into eating hot food at the time; I carried around a little powdered habanera in my pocket. I remember thinking, 'OK, this is just kind of like cooking with habanera peppers and rubbing my eyes.' It was burning, and I was drooling, and it sucked and it was awful, but I could deal with it. I remember being really calm and really quiet, while seeing what was going on with Mike. While they were sort of giving me shit, they were actually beating the shit out of him. They had one of those big flashlights, and they were beating his calf muscles, two cops, one on each calf. He was screaming, and at one point he passed out. That was really scary, because he was my lockdown partner, and I loved him, and to see him in that kind of pain, with not a god damn thing I could do about it ... it was just awful. Eventually he did unlock, because they were beating the shit out of him, and they took him upstairs.

Then I was like, 'Oh fabulous! I'm down here by myself. This is not good ...' There was no media, no witnesses ... I thought, 'They're here, I'm here, they could do anything they want.' And I had no doubt that they would. I thought that they could kill me, demolish the house, and that would be the end of it. Nobody would know, what would be their repercussion for that? I had been beaten up by cops before, while locked down, it was nothing new, but this was the scariest thing. No one imagines anything like that. So I'm down there, and they're saying, "You're big boyfriend's not so big now, is he?" They were talking shit. I was talking back and being a smartass, and they were pissed off about it.

Then at some point, one of them put a gun to my head, and said, "Listen bitch, enough of this shit. Unlock or I'll shoot." Then I said, "Um, OK," and I unlocked, because what are you going to do? I had no doubt whatsoever that he meant it. It could have been an empty threat, but how the fuck was I gonna know that? I heard all the stuff going on outside, and I had no way of knowing whether people were getting killed. It wasn't until I went to jail that I was like "Did anyone get killed?," and learned that no one did.

So I unlocked, and they dragged me up the stairs, talking shit the whole time, "You're not making any difference ..."

Everyone who had been arrested, both in that house and at the Sacred Fire, was sitting in the living room together, handcuffed, on the floor. Obviously Mike and I looked pretty bad, because everyone was like, "Oh my god, what the fuck did you do to them?" I couldn't see because of the pepper spray. I later learned it was Tom Bottalene, who let me lay my head in his lap and wipe all my tears and snot all over his pants, which I am forever indebted for...

Everyone was like, "You need to get them medical attention." They said they wouldn't give us medical attention until we gave them our names. They asked me my name and I said, "No compromise." They said, "No, what's your full name?" I said, "No fucking compromise!" They left me alone after that.

Eventually they took us outside to the steps. It was really cold. I think I had shoes. Mike didn't have shoes. I didn't have a jacket on. We were freezing our asses off. [I told the cop] I was freezing, and she went down and got my sweatshirt, and wrapped it around me. That was a really nice thing to do, she didn't have to do that. We sat out there, for it seemed like an hour. We were some of the last people to leave the site. Mike kept passing out. I was singing to him and singing to him and singing to him to try to keep him awake, and because I knew it would make him feel better.

Finally they put Mike back in the house and me into a riot van with a bunch of people, none of whom I actually knew. We were in there for so long, by the time we left I could see again. There were so many cops, all the way up 54th street, all the way up to the Holiday, on the other side all the way to Highway 62. I was like, 'What the fuck is this?!' I had never seen so many cops in my life. I didn't know what was going on.

They took us to jail. In retrospect, they took us to jail by a really fucked-up route. It took us an hour and a half to get to jail. A woman in the van with us was asking for medical attention, and they were like, "Ha, ha, you can't have it." I remember they played "Rock you like a Hurricane" in the paddy wagon. I thought that was really funny.

We got to jail, and everyone looked really bad. We were all asking each other, "What happened to you? What happened to you?" Kevin was all bloody. I finally saw Mike. He was still blind, he was blind for hours. I will never forget the way he looked, ever. I'm picturing it right now, he looked awful. He had taught me sign language a couple days before, and once he could see it proved very useful, we communicated from the girls' room to the boys' room.

In a way it was good to be in jail, because I got to see that everyone was OK. Then we got out, and I went home for Christmas. I was like, 'I want to see my family, I have no stuff, my house just got destroyed, everything is fucked-up, everything is gone.'

* * *

Mike's leg hurt for months. He would wake up in the middle of the night, screaming, in March, because his leg hurt. It's fucking awful to see your partner like that. For almost a year afterward, helicopters would give me flashbacks; I would start shaking and crying, and would have to go sit down, if I heard a helicopter. I seriously think I had some kind of post traumatic stress from it, although I didn't really have those words for it at the time.

Bear

We knew they were gonna raid us. We were all there that night, a couple hundred of us. We had the sacred drum outside. Seven Ryder trucks came, troopers on all of them. So we were sitting on the drum, and my uncle Dick Bancroft was there taking pictures.

So they started taking everybody off the drum. I had the drum, and I said, "Save the drum, protect the sacred drum. Don't kick it or nothing like that." The cop said, "Where you're going, you don't need a sacred drum," and he kicked it right out of my hand. We heard the women across the street say, "Protect the sacred drum!" They threw us all on the ground in the snow and kicked the sacred drum to the side.

They put us inside the first house. It was really sad because I saw a lot of my friends come up, they were coughing and tear gassed, wouldn't give them any first aid, and were dragging one girl up the stairs by her hair. They tear gassed everybody, and threatened to shoot a couple of our friends downstairs.

We told them we didn't have any weapons, there were no booby traps or anything like that. We had undercover cops that snitched us out, told where all our hiding places were.

Methane

The only thing nobody told them about was my lockdown. Everything else they were informed about, but my lockdown had just gone in three days before, in like a two hour period, and they were just not informed with respect to it. That's why I was able to be up there for so long, after everybody else had been removed. With the news cameras now there, the police had to use a different protocol. **(See photo p. 190)**

* * *

Instructive to anyone who ever has to deal with a hostage negotiator: they try all these tactics to try and manipulate you, and gain your trust, and give you something so you have to give them something back. They always want to know, "What do you want? What can I give you? What can I get for you?" The right answer is, "Nothing. I don't want nothing from you. Fuck off and die." You know?

Thunder

Me and Larry, we're a couple of Ojibwes that come down to help them Dakotas take care of their area down there, and try to get it back for themselves. Now we're here at the Mendota Powwow, this is my fourth year here.

What I saw that morning was, I was woken up to a bunch of yelling going on, I heard these cops, "Minneapolis Police! Get on the ground!" I come out of my tent, I was in there sleeping, I come out and I see these cops runnin' with their guns with their laser scopes shining around. Then I hear these windows breaking and I could smell gas, CS, right away. So I start heading over to the Sacred Fire and I seen them taking Bear and Zac and they had them on the ground in the snow outside there. I said, "Man, I can't go over there!"

I turn around and headed back towards the back again, and I see the cops head into Cafe Two Pines. They went in there with these nightsticks and you could just hear stuff crashing, they were just bustin' up the place. I seen them haul a couple people out of there and throw them down in the snow and had their guns on their heads. I thought, "Huh, I ain't goin' that way!"

So I headed out to the back, through the woods, and I ran into the Mighty Marshmallow. He was out there! So we took off across the road. Just as we got across that road, man, here come six city buses. I seen them comin', I'm lookin', I'm like "What the heck are them buses doin' on this road?" I seen them pull up, and it was standing room only cops on them buses. It was just packed. They get out and start heading just the same way we had just come, so I'm like, "Man, I'm glad I got by there!"

So we kind of snuck through the woods and got to Dewitt's, used his phone and started calling people. Then I went around the block ...

That was a really hard day to watch, to see my friends getting hauled in by the police. I seen Aspen with blood on his head, big bandage on his head, people throwing up outside the houses from gas, whatever else the police had done to them people. It was a needless thing really, cause they didn't have to come in there like that. I served my country in the military! So did Larry, we're both veterans, and here we got the police, this police state, coming down on us...

Larry Lemieux

I remember the night of the first raid. It was about two o' clock in the morning, and I was sleeping on that recliner by the fire. It was just going out. I don't even remember who was sleeping around me. I was afraid I was going to fall asleep. I was just dozing off, then all of a sudden I hear, "Larry!" Bear was screaming at me. So I come out and he says, "Why don't you take a ride and go find out what's happening down at the airport and come back and tell me."

I hop in my car, drive out, drive all the way down 55, see squad cars, drive down to the airport, then I hit MNDoT and see squad cars. I couldn't figure out where they were all centrally located. This is going on three o'clock. I went back to check the Sacred Fire, parked close to the bus. I'm walking back and all of a sudden I see a state trooper coming past me, about 50 miles per hour. I thought, 'Holy shit!' Security on the south side said the trooper just passed him at about 50, and the other one on the east side, said they're all coming in.

All of a sudden I looked up and after I saw the troopers come I saw the trucks come. While I'm standing there, watching all this, looking, the troopers come just flying by me! I'm at the pines and I'm just standing there! They're just flying by me. All of a sudden I see the five trucks come, barreling down there about 50 miles an hour, there's five trucks! I'm watching, I'm thinking, 'Holy shit!' cause all of a sudden the trucks bust open, and all these guys fly out, with M-16s with laser scopes, all in black, they go running in two lines, and I'm standing there by the pines! They're not even touching me, there's squad cars two abreast. They weren't bothering me, just flying by.

So I'm standing there, and I see Pizza Man, he's across the street. I don't know where he came from, this is four o'clock or so, and he's standing with his camcorder. While I stepped across the street to dodge a squad car as they're flying by me, I asked him, I said, "What are you doing?" He said, "Well, I'm counting squad cars." I said, "Well what do you got now?" He said, "Well I lost count once but I think I'm up to three hundred." So standing there, watching them. By that time it was snowing. He's taping this. All of a sudden we hear the canisters popping. We smell the tear gas.

So I started walking, and all of a sudden Carol Kratz started coming out, and somebody hollered, "Get her out! Get Carol out, you gotta get Carol out!" Carol was just bawling, crying. They asked me to get her out. She's bundled up, she's crying, and Dan said, "We gotta get her out before the cops, the cops are gonna arrest Carol."

So we started walking towards the bus, cause I think I was gonna get her in my car, and just as we look up, busloads of city cops come up, two busloads, line up and start marching towards us. So I say, "Carol, we can do it." So we started walking, and get to somebody's house, a fence. So I pick Carol up, lifted her across, and lowered her into somebody else's yard. I hopped across. We got to the other side, I picked her up, put her over, and we made it to the street. I got her to my car and we got her out.

Carol Kratz

I was just across the street from my beloved house, helpless to

do anything to protect it. While my life there flashed before me I was literally ill. My friends were being brutalized across the street and we could not see in the darkness what was happening. A live Santa Claus was on the chimney of one of the houses and, through tears and fear, we sang Christmas carols to him and the police. Santa enjoyed the music, but the spirit of Christmas did not bring out any mercy
from the hearts of the police.

Dick Bancroft

I got a phone call at three in the morning, early Sunday. It was from Clyde Bellecourt, telling me that the police were going to make a raid on the camp, and come in with significant strength.

So I put my clothes on. The temperature was about zero, there was a light snowfall. I went to the site. When I got there, it was extremely serene and peaceful. This was about 3:30.

I parked the car at the Holiday gas station and walked to the houses. I went into the tipi and Bear was there, and Zac, and a guy named Pete. They were up and aware of the fact that this hit was coming. I did see two highway patrolmen parked on the median near the fort, but I didn't see anything else that indicated that this was going to happen. I went out to the sidewalk.

About four o' clock a horn went off. I think Bear blew it, and around the corner came vehicles, with no headlights, that turned out to be Ryder trucks. They drove up the boulevard and into the front yard of each of the houses. One of the trucks almost ran me over, and I yelled at him to turn his lights on!

I'm standing there with my camera in my bag. I pull it out, and then I heard the drum coming out of the tipi. Then I heard a voice say, "You can't touch the drum." There was verbal resistance to the police doing something to the drum. So I pulled my camera out and started walking towards the incident and shooting with flash, this incident. That's what I do. I photograph Indians under circumstances like this all the time.

I didn't get very far. There were no lights anywhere, and the flash was like, "BOOM! BOOM! BOOM!" The drum stops, and the next thing I know I'm flat on my face. I've been jumped from behind, by I think highway patrolmen. I found myself face down, and my camera, which was around my neck, is no longer there, and neither is my press pass. My camera bag is tipped over, spilling all the contents on the snow. It happened so fast, you don't realize what's going on at first. I look over, and there's Botalini and Pepperwolf. Tom says to me, "Dick, are you OK?" and I said, "Yeah, but my camera bag is upset." So he wiggled over to where I was and we put the stuff back into the bag with our hands in handcuffs.

A half an hour goes by. During that time, a female patrol officer came up to me. I said to her, "Why am I arrested? I'm a member of the press." She said, "Where's your press pass?" I said, "Well, it must have come off. It's around here somewhere." So she pulled out a flashlight, looked around, and found it. She looked at it, turned it over, and said, "It isn't any good, it doesn't have a red mark on it. " I said, "Well, where do you get the red mark?" She didn't answer me. Then I said, "Would you put that in my pocket for me?" She did. She reached down and stuffed it in my jacket pocket.

Before she left, she reached down, picked up my hat, and put it on my head. That helped, because I don't have much hair. Giving me my press card and hat were gestures of humanity that I appreciated at the time and still do.

Now, I was not cold sitting here. I had plenty of clothes on. I was not uncomfortable, but I was confused. I thought, 'What do I do? I have the right to be here, at least I thought I did, and I'm not getting that treatment. What's the red mark mean ...' Anyway, I sat there for awhile, and then I was told to get up. I asked if I could take my cameras with me and they said nope, and put me in the back of a police van; I'm the first one in.

I sit down on the bench, and for the next half hour, the van was filled up with people they were pulling out of the houses. The first thing that struck me was that my eyes started to water because of the chemicals that were on these people, in their clothing, and in their lungs. It was permeating this heated, confined area, so we were getting regassed by the fumes that each person carried. There ended up being ten or twelve of us. You're much more aware of your eyes watering when you can't wipe them, with your hands behind you.

So we're checking each other out, finding out who was where and what happened to them. There are two little windows in the back, and we took turns looking out them. You could see Santa Claus sitting on the chimney, and by this time they had floodlights on him. The fire department was there, and they were trying to get up on the roof and remove him. The lights on him gave us comic relief, as well as a good feeling, and I began to feel that I was not neutral anymore, I'm not a neutral media person, I'm now on the side of the oppressed, because I'm locked up in handcuffs.

We were processed by the sheriffs in Hennepin County jail. It was really degrading; they stripped us, took most of our clothes, gave us some cotton clothing, it was cold, we were fingerprinted on the computer screen, we were photographed, and given an orange and maybe some bread to eat. We were told to sit here and sit there. They just took their sweet time. It was a couple hours I think.

I remember having a little verbal altercation with one of the sheriffs, a kid who spoke such slang that I couldn't understand him. He said, "Are you hard of hearing?" and I said, "No, you don't speak good English." It was a strange encounter I had with this young man who had cauliflower ears.

They spread us around in the jail, so there were only four of us in the cell block: Zac and Pete, two of the guys from the drum, and Joe Hill, who was on the tripod. He was very impressive to me. First of all, he couldn't see, because he'd been maced in the eyes. Then after he got his sight back by washing his eyes, they were going to feed us lunch, and he said, "I'm not going to eat until they charge me. I don't know why I'm here, I'm not gonna eat." So we ate his breakfast. He never did eat. He also read the instructions on the wall in the jail. They said you were entitled to a book wagon. So Joe Hill said, "How many books can I have?" They said, "Six." So Joe said, "All right, I'll take six." Obviously he wasn't gonna read six books, but he took them anyway.

Then they had role call, and the only other incident that occurred was that I saved an orange from one of my meals, and they came in to inspect my bed, and the orange was sitting on my bed. This young guy who had given me a hard time before came in and said, "You gotta eat your orange." I said, "What do you mean I gotta eat my orange. I'm gonna eat it. "He said, "You gotta eat it right now. You can't have it sitting there." I said, "Why not? Why can't I eat it in ten minutes?" "Cause you'll make hooch out of it," he said, meaning I'd let it ferment, and then I'd have an alcoholic beverage of some kind. That was the reason I couldn't keep it. I thought, 'This is pathetic. This is a really sad situation.'

We stayed there the maximum 36 hours. I played scrabble with Zac and Pete who always won. I was the loser, and this infuriated me more than the arrest. We could stand up on a heat vent and see the dome where the Vikings were playing.

Then they let us out, and my first concern was my camera. Events unfolded, and I hired a lawyer which cost $1400. He wrote some letters. I needed my camera back within two weeks, and it took just two weeks to get it back.

It was dirty, but OK. I went to roll the film up, and noticed it was up to 26, so I thought somebody had taken the camera and shot the remaining frames. They had; someone in the police department had taken the camera and run the film out, but they didn't know how to rewind it. [It was gone.] My lawyer advised me that they had violated my Fifth Amendment rights, Freedom of the Press, but they had also destroyed evidence. The public safety department at first denied that it had happened. Later on Weaver, who came into office with Ventura, realized that in fact someone had taken the film out. He did not name the person, but he said that it was unfortunate and should not have happened. He admitted it clearly, and it was in the paper. Then I went to Columbia, events unfolded, and I made a decision not to pursue it. I could've gotten some money, and reminded the police department to behave responsibly, but I didn't, with some regret, I should mention.

Lynn Levine

During the first raid, when the police cars were lining up bumper to bumper to block off our access, and then [the police] stood next to the police cars with their batons touching, this young man that I was with was watching this. He said, "Why are they doing that?" I said, "They're making a barricade so that we can't witness the violence that's happening to our friends across the road." This young police officer was watching me say that. He looked at me and I said, "That's right, isn't it?" and he nodded his head yes, that was right.

Then the police raid on Michelle's bus. She was in the bus sleeping with her little girl [Brie], and she believed that she was outside the perimeter. She had said that she would leave, she would not subject her little girl to this. Michelle had been threatened by the county that they were going to take her child because she was out there. So she got into her bus and drove a block and a half away, which we thought was outside where the perimeter was going to be. The police line ended up including the bus, and because they had made that circle around the bus, they considered the bus to be invading their space.

At some point you could see it hit them that they wanted to search the bus. They got their riot gear and their guns and they were going to go on this bus where this four-year-old child was sleeping. I begged them not to do that. I said, "You don't understand how scary you look. You're going to wake up a sleeping baby, rushing in on her sleeping area with your guns and your uniforms..." They listened to me for a moment, and then they did it.

Michelle said they came in and tore the covers off them, and separated them and took them away. I spent the night on the phone [looking for them]. I was never able to find out that they were OK, [which] they were. But that shouldn't have been at risk, [whether] they were OK.

Prior to that there were other people who were down there with their children who were threatened by child protection, and they left; left where they were encamped in a loving community. If we have child protection workers, their time should not have been wasted out at camp. Those children were very safe.

Aaron Wenger

[The raid] was all kind of a dream. I think I've watched too much television or something, because I couldn't accept that it was real, and then I didn't have anything really coherent to say to them. I should've said, "Nobody here wants to hurt you," because they were all pumped up, afraid of booby traps ...

I was support for one of the houses, on the first floor. Marshall and Solstice were in the basement. They had built a closed in room, and had their arms locked into the fireplace. There were covert operatives that had gone past me without me noticing somehow ... I think I was just distracted, it's strange, I've never been able to figure that out ... and planted tear gas in the basement, just before the cops showed up. So they came out immediately. The cops went down, there was shouting, and they were carried out, coughing. I just went. They had rifles and guns drawn, cocked and loaded. I didn't mess around. They had laser sights ... They put plastic cuffs on me, that were tight and kind of cut off circulation, and made my hands cold.

Then I went outside, and they were singing some song I didn't know. I half joined in. I felt so useless; for weeks I could have been learning songs to sing at such a time, that we knew was going to come, but no … (laughs) The person who stayed the longest was Methane in the Santa Claus suit, because he was on the roof, and tear gas couldn't get him. At one point they asked me, "How do you get on the roof?" I told them to use a ladder. I didn't tell them there was a way to get on the roof from the third floor. Why tell them that?

[Jail] was deadening. It's hard to imagine people who write books in jail. You have to have a really active mind. I went on automatic, tried to sleep as much as I could. It seemed like a long time, but it was only a day. I didn't want to go back ever again.

Sage Passy

The night of the siege, we had been at Winter Solstice at the Quaker Meeting House. Susu had announced that they were expecting kind of a big bust that evening. I knew it was kind of a sacrifice to put on 10,000 layers of clothes and go out into the dark and not know what I was up for. I was fearful about it, but I knew I had to do it. So I drove up there. I had been involved in some rituals there, but I hadn't been at the camp that much. I got there, and I just knew there was drama. I had been involved with a film at the survival gathering on White Earth [reservation], and so was kind of tuned into the energy of the Native Americans having to hold their ground. Also I'm a documentary person, take photos and do historical kinds of documentation, so that was part of my motivation for coming that night.

All of a sudden, it was very dramatic, the Ryder trucks. I had never been in the middle of such an intense siege before. My first instinct was safety. I felt like I came as a witness, I didn't come to do civil disobedience, so my first instinct was to get the hell out of the immediate area. These trucks and these people were coming at us. So I crossed the road. It was a very dramatic procession of police cars, state cars, creating this barricade. I felt like I was revisiting World War II, other time periods, all at once. It started snowing, so your vision was obscured. I hooked up with my friend Leo, who's a reporter for Southside Pride, and he told me how he was being thwarted from covering the story.

Of course there was the horrible burning down of the sweat lodge, and watching the governor walking in front of that huge bonfire. This is WWII. This is the Nazis burning all the sacred reading and knowledge.

It was the destruction of whatever naivete I had left in me about safety in my community. I remember driving home on a normal street, saying, "I'll never be safe here again." Like after I was beaten up in a holdup in the co-op. Some experiences just take away your sense of security. It was [also] my awakening about the level to which our community was willing to go to wield it's own controls.

Annie Mohler

I was working with two autistic fellows [at the time], so I would bring them down to the Free State sometimes. So they had seen [the first camp] when it was a functioning place. On the morning after the raid I took them down there, and the one boy never talks. We got to the end where all the houses were, through the tape, past the officials, and this autistic boy turned around and goes, "Boo! Boo! Boo!" and was shaking his fist. Here's this nonverbal [boy], and he knows that what's happened here is not right. I'll never forget that.

John Kolstad

Let's move up to December 20th of 1998, when people were occupying the seven houses. They were doing it because every other process failed. A lot of people did a lot of work to go through the proper process, and it all failed because nobody would listen to them, I think because the fix was in. So as the last resort, a group of people occupied the houses.

Now the objection was that they were trespassing, but if you recall, this property had all been purchased under eminent domain. They forced them to sell it and forced them to take the price offered, which is also forbidden in the constitution, but they did it anyway.

So if they're saying they're trespassing, they're trespassing on public land, because this was purchased by MNDoT, which is a state agency, so effectively they were on public property owned by them. MNDoT is not a separate company! I never heard anyone make this point, but I always thought it was ironic that they said they were trespassing.

So Jim Niland told Chief Olson directly that these people were totally peaceful, they were not going to resist, they don't have any weapons, they don't allow drugs or alcohol, there was no reason for anybody to be hurt.

Despite all this, the police committed criminal acts. They are not only acts that are illegal in the United States, they are against international law. They used chemical irritants to torture somebody deliberately, who was not resisting, and who was already in handcuffs. That's a criminal offense! Nobody in this city has ever pursued this. I've asked them to, council members, county commissioners, Mark Andrews, Jim Niland, the City Attorney ...

Henry Fieldseth

After it was all over, we had that press conference. Several people referred to what happened to us as torture. I figured there must be some definitions of what torture is, what are the legal definitions of torture? I know that we have something in Minneapolis called the Center for Victims of Torture, which is an innovative thing in the world for helping people deal with the trauma of having been tortured. So I called them and asked them if there was such a thing. They said, "Sure, would you like us to send it to you?" So I asked them to send me the definition of torture.

They sent me a couple page document that had four different definitions of torture: The United Nations' definition of torture and the International Doctor's Organization's definition of torture, and then two other ones. According to the most conservative of those, what happened to us was classic torture. It was agents of the State, punishing us, to stop us from doing something that they didn't want us to do, and to set an example for other people that they would be mistreated if they did what we did. That's exactly what happened to us, and that's exactly the classic definition of torture. And yet the Center for Victims of Torture refuses to admit that torture happens in the United States.

So I sent them my account of what happened to me, and they refused to acknowledge that I even sent it to them, it was real weird .... but what happened to us was torture, and it was ugly and horrible.

Sam Adams

Those of us locked down in position were tortured with pepper spray shot into our eyes and mouths at point-blank range before being cut loose and removed. They knew any criminal charges against us wouldn't amount to much, so they decided to punish us themselves. To this day, I have a hard time looking at anyone in a police uniform without thinking, there goes a coward and a bully. I know they're not all bad at heart, but if you're a cop, and the bully next to you might have to save your life one day, chances are you're not going to say anything. They have surrendered themselves to a mentality in which a little torture is acceptable for what they consider "law and order."

Bear

They wouldn't let us out of jail until they bulldozed all the houses down. We saw it on TV. We got out of jail and it was really great to see all of our supporters there. Jim was there, and he said, "Let's go down to camp." We went back down to camp and saw a couple of the college girls running around the fire. I said, "Aaniin, boojoo, good, you kept the fire going." They said, "Yeah, we wouldn't let it go out."

So we took some of the coals from the old fire and took it over to the Four Sacred Trees. There were a couple people chained to the trees. I talked to Bob Brown and said, "I don't think they should be chained to the Sacred Trees." Bob said, no, so I went and told them, "We don't want you chained to the Sacred Trees, but we can camp right here."

Debbra

Over 600 law enforcement was a little extreme, the bill for it was obscene, the donuts were obscene, etc., etc. We immediately regrouped and went to the Four Trees area.

Minneapolis Star and Tribune

February 22nd, 1999

FYI

Coffee, donuts fueled Hwy. 55 raid

You've heards how an army moves on its stomach? Turn's out, an army of police, sheriff's deputies and State Patrol officers is fueled by food, too.

On December 20, more than 600 officers moved 36 people protesting the Highway 55 reroute from their encampment in the path of the planned road. The overtime bill was at least $332,488. But there were snack costs as well. Tinucci's Restaurant and Catering fed the force. Here's the bill:

>500 doughnuts, muffins and coffee at $4.95 per officer: $2,475
>100 extra doughnuts at 75 cents each: $75
>525 box lunches, $6.95 each: $3,645.75
>20 gallons of extra coffee: $140

The total, with tax: $7,309.90

*-**Doug Grow***

The War at Home

By Susu Jeffrey

We're going to keep on bombing
until we put an end to the violence.
Pres. William Jefferson Clinton (on Iraq)

Crack squads
tactical teams
jump out of Ryder
rental trucks.
Red laser beams
from M-16 sights
dance around us
three hours before dawn.

Not one person
is violent
(except the cops).
Not one person
resists
and the cops complain
they can't kick butt.
Not one person breaks
nonviolent discipline.

Cops pry eyelids open
smear mace on eyeballs
with gloved fingers
spray pepper gas
from five inches
"I got something for you"
psssst-psssst and again
and again. Not one person
lifts their hands
to protect their faces
but the media isn't allowed
just like in Iraq.
See who gets hurt.
Ask who profits.

The war in Iraq
is the same war
as the war at home.

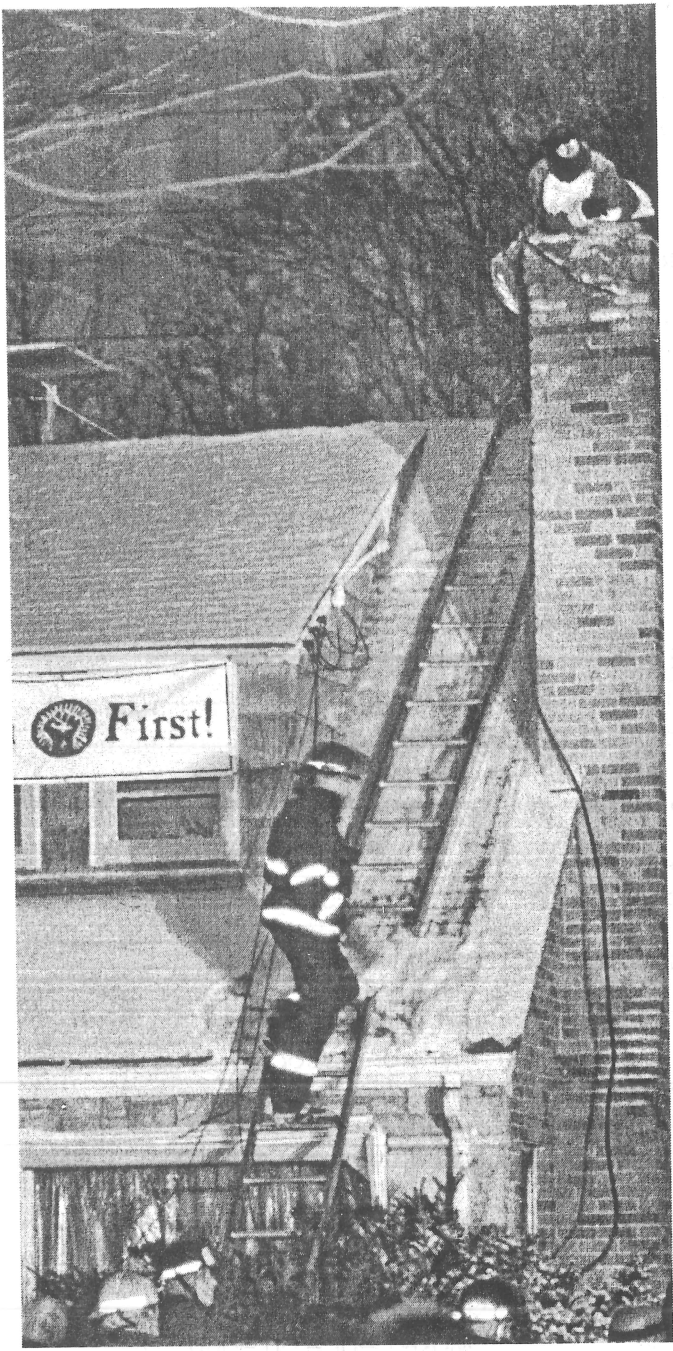
The war at home
the war in Kosovo
Liberia, Serbia, Chiapas
East Timor, Littleton, Colorado
it's the same war
on every continent
and the same people profit

802 cops promised
a Christmas bonus
for the December 20 bust
of 38 treehuggers
at $15,000 per arrest.

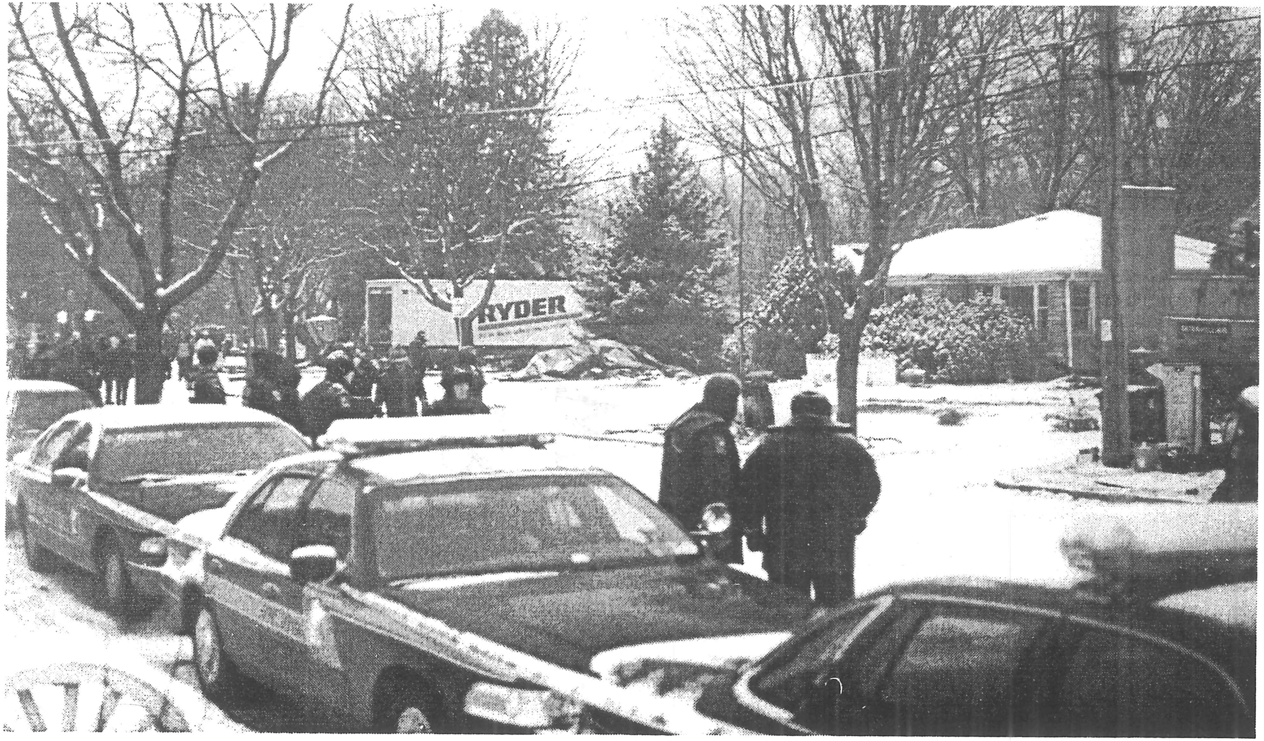
Kevin got clubbed
after he was cuffed
then he got gassed.
They wrapped his shirt
around his head
God he bled!

If we could just get the cops
to obey the law.
The Hiawatha reroute
violates
federal law.
The wrong people
are on trial.
A road through a park?--
sacred land?-- cemetary?

Stop it!
Stop it.
Stop the road.
Stop the violence.
Make peace on earth.

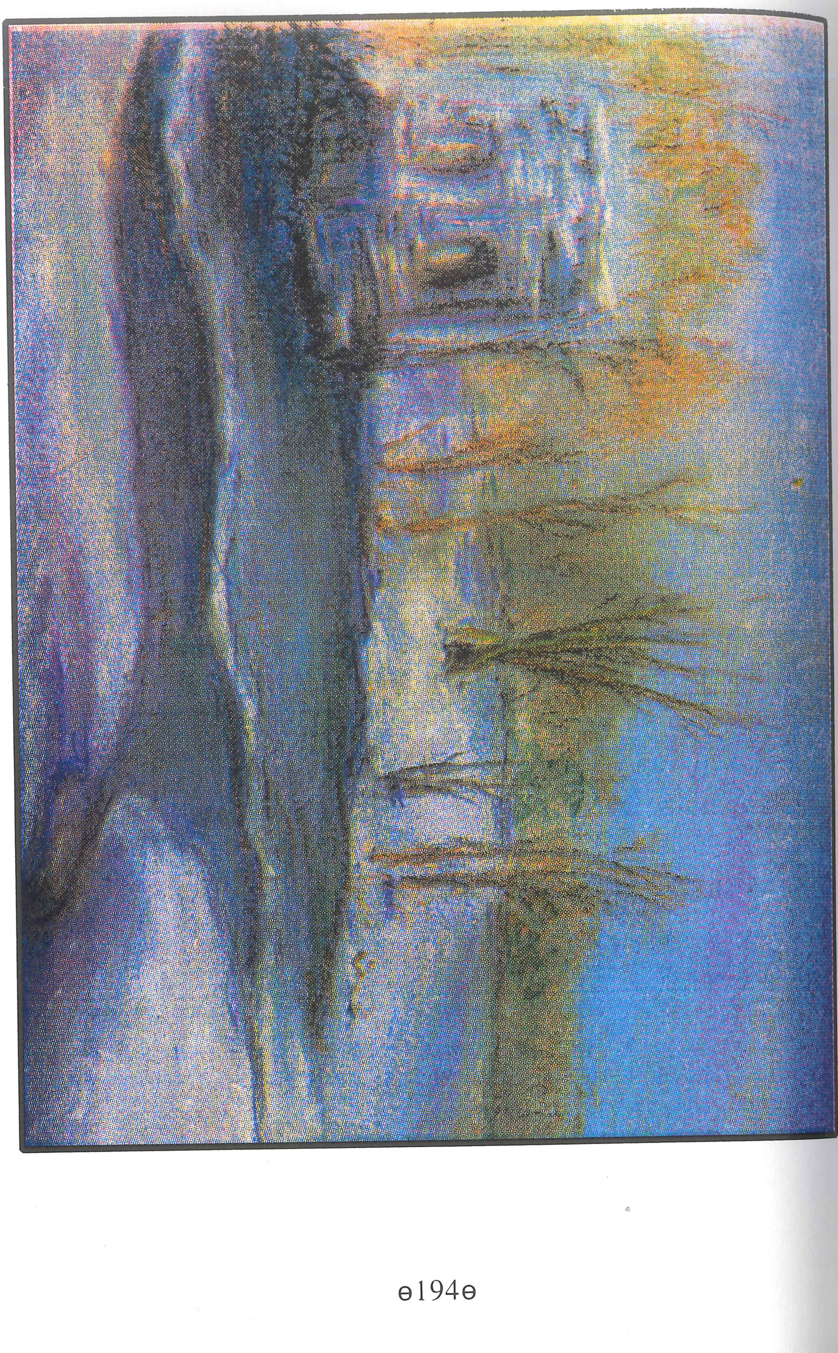


A Minneapolis Fire Rescue officer climbs a ladder to remove Santa Claus from the chimney as other Fire and Police officers mill about below. (See pp. 127 and 176 for details. Photo used courtesy of Minneapolis Star-Tribune)



After all occupants are arrested, state troopers stand watch as the houses are demolished.

PART TWO



CHAPTER TEN

While the State was congratulating themselves on a job well done...

Stories From Winter 1999

They came in and they thought they would scare us away, but three days later, we went and occupied where the Four Trees were...

-Jim Anderson

Jan Dalsin

The smell in the air was that of diesel fuel, that gets left in the earth when all of this is gone. Bulldozed houses, trees damaged… it was like going to a wake. The people were sort of quiet, talking in low tones.

Around three o'clock, people started gathering, the wonderful resilience of the human spirit. What happened was the digging out of the fire from where it had been saved and buried. Wally came and led the group, Native and non-native peoples, maybe 15 of us, formed a circle. What we did was reclaimed; we called upon the spirits to call forth our spirit, to keep going. Though the houses were gone, we were still going to be there, to continue to carry on the struggle to save the land and the trees. We rekindled the fire, Wally led the ceremony… he was not the elder coming there to do it, but he was the person who was there who could do it. He respectfully referred to all of us there, and asked us to bear witness and continue the struggle, because so many of the people who had been there, were now in jail!

So we lined the ground with pipestone and put the embers of the fire there, and different people prayed, said the sentiments from their heart. At that point I asked Wally if it might be appropriate that I sing a song that some of us sisters had sung previously at a rally at camp, and I sang Every Part of the Earth is Holy. I said that was my gift to carry over from before and after the raid, from us sisters, that we would continue on this journey with his people and the people protecting the earth, and Wally put in my hands a piece of pipestone, and I said, "I accept this, from your people to my people, that we will continue in this struggle." We have been!

Bear

So we started camping there. All we had there was tents in the middle of winter. We stayed there 24 hours a day. Eventually we let people know that we were gonna camp right there, so people started coming. We started building the Star Lodge and the kitchen, started making tobacco ties and putting them up around the Four Trees, putting up flags around the Four Trees...

We met a lot of good people. A lot of young people came by. They asked us questions, and I tried to answer as best I could. The thing is, I learned a lot from the young people there also. Down at the camp was a family. Seventeen months we were there, there was no violence. We ate together, slept together, we built the sweat lodge there again. A lot of the people had never been to a sweat before. We told them about the ceremony and they really liked it. We had different people come down and run sweats for us.

A lot of people from different states came down and offered tobacco to the trees, and had visions there. We know that it's a sacred place, we saw spirits down there. A lot of our people are still buried around that area. MNDoT don't care. A long time ago they did have ceremonies there, pipe ceremonies and a sundance. Our people went there a long time ago and had a vision about the Four Sacred Trees, so they were in four directions.

I enjoyed myself down there, listening to the people with guitars around the fire at night, singing, having ceremonies down there, a lot of us doing security all night.

Leo Ronneng

My name is Leo Ronneng, I'm vice chairman of the Mendota Mdewakanton Dakota Community. We got involved with the Highway 55 reroute shortly after the Sundance. I remember they used to have drum groups down there. The people that were helping out to protect that area started a little café. I used to bring food down to them. People got very ingenious with how to protect and bring together the community.

I didn't really get too involved until after the first raid. I got a call, and I went down there early in the morning. There we saw them dragging people off, hitting on people, being teargassed, crying, sitting out in the snow for 20 minutes at a time. They tore down a tipi, we pleaded with them. They tore down a sweat lodge, we pleaded with them. Governor Carlson came down early in the morning as they were demolishing the last of the houses, and was shaking the hands of all the police officers that were there.

To me it wasn't real, it was like a nightmare. How could this thing happen? How could you have squad cars lined up end to end for over a mile just to arrest 38 people who wanted to stop a road from going through an area that was sacred to them? I couldn't believe such massive force to accomplish what seemed to be so little. None of the reporters were let in to that area until after the people were arrested and the raid was over.

The very next morning we went back down there, and a few of us gave a speech. There must have been 75 or 100 of us there. Two days later I went out to the Pine Ridge reservation and spoke to some elders there. I told them about these things that happened to us. After I got done speaking, one of the older ladies, she must have been close to 80, came up to me and said, "I'm glad you told us these things, because I thought these things only happened to us."

Then we came back, and a couple other people asked me if they could camp at the Four Trees. I told them, "You need to do what you need to do." So a few of them went down there, and it started out that they chained themselves to the trees and slept down there. Nobody bothered us. As time grew they stopped chaining themselves to the trees, and we started a little camp down there.

We had people come from different reservations. I personally brought elders from California, Colorado and Kansas down there. They sang songs and said prayers for us. All kinds of people said prayers down there, not only for the springs and the Four Trees, but also for the things that happened down there.

I remember seeing a lot of young people that would come down, and they were quiet, or angry sometimes. A lot of them didn't have any trust for older people. We ended up putting up a sweat lodge down there, and having ceremonies at the spring. A lot of these people started to come to some of these, to observe if nothing else. Then a lot of them came to trust some of the older people, and grow to respect a lot of them. Bear was kind of their leader in arms, people would go to him for advice. He would always ask some of the other elders.

The biggest thing I enjoyed was watching these young people, their lives change. Some of these people were so mean, bitter, withdrawn. After a few months down there, you wouldn't even recognize some of these people! They're the sweetest people, very helpful, very respectful. That place, if nothing else, has done a world of good for a few people at least.

Madeline Gardner

Once the second Free State got set up, it was winter, and I started going there a couple days a week after school. I would just do little things around camp, because it needed to be done, but also I just wanted to feel like I was contributing in some way. I remember sitting in the fire ring and doing homework after school, and having all my papers get snowed on. I remember sometimes Methane would come and do my math homework for me, cause that was my least favorite subject.

I always wanted to spend the night on weekends, but my parents really didn't want me to. My parents and I had always gotten along well, but we started getting in a lot of fights about how much time I was allowed to spend at the Free State. They were scared for me, thought I was gonna get hurt, that it was illegal, that I was gonna get arrested, that the people down there were gonna take advantage of me. They would always say, "Well, you know, we agree with the cause, but ..." and then they always had this "but," like, "We don't want you to be a bum, who lives off other people, and just goes from cause to cause." I think the bottom line was, they were just scared. We'd have, not so much fights, but these huge passionate arguments, that would consist of them giving all their reasons for why they didn't want me to spend so much time down there, and me giving all my reasons of how important this is to me, and what a good thing this is, and how many amazing people are down there, and people down there watch out for each other, and I'm not gonna get hurt ... I loved it down there so much, and felt like I was learning so many things, and being put in hard situations and growing as a person.

My parents would always say, "You can do this when you're older, not now, you're only 16." I remember at the time, thinking, realizing what a precious, amazing situation it was there, and that it's not the kind of thing that comes around every day. It might not have been convenient that it was there at the same time that I was only 16, but those were the facts, and I had to be a part of it. Even now, three years later, I guess it's not that much later, but it's still the most amazing thing that I've ever been a part of. Since then I've travelled a lot, I've seen a lot of things, and there's nothing like it.

Eventually, my older sister Annie took time off from college to go live down at the Free State. After that, my parents weren't as concerned as they were before. That was really good for me; I was allowed to go down there a lot more.

That summer, my parents started coming down to the camp themselves. They met people and saw for themselves how important the fight was, beyond just taking my word for it. Even though they continued to worry about me, my parents supported me and my sisters.

When it was still pretty small and it was really cold, there were these two guys who came, I don't remember where they came from, some other state, one of them claimed he was a medicine man or something like that. I remember they brought boxes of toilet paper, they had done this collection or something and gotten all this food. It was really good, we were glad they were there. Me and my younger sister Emily, who came and hung out sometimes, went with one of the guys in his car down to the spring to get water one day. We were talking with him about various things. He started acting in a way that made both of us very uncomfortable, and just made me not want to be alone at the spring with him anymore. I don't really remember specifically what he said, but I had a feeling that it wasn't very smart for us to come down here with him alone. I remember we went back and then I talked with Bear about it. I didn't quite know what to expect when I talked with Bear about it, but he immediately said, "Do you want me to kick him out? I'll kick him out. I'll kick him out right now!" "No, I don't want you to do that, I just wanted you to be aware of this ..." I was touched by that immediate solidarity reaction, of taking care of each other. Especially once I got to know more people, the sense that everyone looked out for each other was very strong.

I liked going to coalition meetings. The meetings themselves were often rather dysfunctional, and it sometimes seemed like not very much got done. There were a lot of people who went to the coalition meetings who were people we didn't see at camp much. A lot of grandmotherly types, who were always like, "Oh, you wonderful young people!! These are the young people saving the trees!!" They were just such genuinely nice, good people! I loved that back room at the Gathering Grounds, the Christmas lights around, especially when it was cold outside, everyone would go there ... It was a meeting, but it was also like, "Oh, I haven't seen you since last week", and people would talk.

Annie

I first got involved in the Free State the morning after the raid on the houses. I spent a lot of time at the Free State that winter. One of the first people I met was Garret.

One morning Maddie and I went down to the Free State and sat with Garret around the fire. At this time the Free State consisted only of the Four Trees, the camper that Bear slept in, and a fire. Garret was playing his guitar and talking about his plans for Y2K. He said he was going to buy a horse and go off into the woods to live.

Another time, Maddie and I met Caleb. He invited us to spend the night; it was my first time. I dressed really warm, I had never slept outside during the winter. We slept with a bunch of other people in a big green army tent next to the Four Trees.

Bear always offered to let me sleep in the camper with him and Tarzana, but I felt like I would be intruding on their space because that was their home.

Then we got the yellow school bus, that made it easier to spend the night. I spent many nights in the back of the bus, where the seats were taken out to make it easier to sleep. The front half was our hang out space, with the seats left in place. We hung a curtain to divide the halves, and we had propane heaters to keep warm.

The coldest night I ever spent at camp was the night I slept in the unfinished pod [in the Star Lodge]. The little room I slept in was completely surrounded with snow. I hardly slept that night, and woke up early from the cold.

I was wearing steel toed boots that winter, and my toes were always really cold; probably not the wisest footwear!

Some nights I would try and stay up and do security with Sky, which usually consisted of sitting by the fire with a blanket wrapped around me, trying to stay warm and awake. I never made it, I always fell asleep. Security wasn't very good that winter because there just weren't enough people to do it properly.

Spending so much time outside made the coming of spring so amazing and significant. I remember when the snow started to melt at camp, everyone was in such high spirits. I think everyone was happy about making it through the winter, and the people and the camp still being there.

Kris T.

Coldwater Café was a small group of people that came down to camp every Sunday morning for the entire year of 1999, to serve fresh hot food to the occupants.

I'm T, basically. Cooked forever, love to cook ... that's about all the relevant information I can think of at the moment. The Coldwater Cafe started directly because of camp, actually. That was how it all began. I got there about three weeks after it began, in January 1999. It was started by Nick and Monica and another guy.

I remember the first time I ever went down there we were serving just coffee and rolls at the trail head, to people who were walking their dogs. We used to get there at some obscenely early hour in the morning. That was Nicholas' idea. The first time I ever went down there, we did everything the night before, and took all the stuff down there. I remember seeing camp, and the way the people talked to me as they passed by, and we gave them coffee, and handed out a lot of literature related to the Free State ... I was totally overwhelmed by how awesome it made me feel to do that, to be part of that in that way, cause I love to cook, I'm just all about food really. That first time down there was really beautiful.

Food was the best way I could think of to directly reach people. Everybody needs food, and it's a good way to break the ice with somebody, "Here! Eat." Captive audience (laughs).

I remember when the brick bread oven got built. That was another thing that motivated Café Coldwater to continue to be involved in camp; it was something we thought was really fun. I remember eating the bread that came out of the oven for the first time, roasted red pepper foccacia, and it was absolutely the best bread I ever ate in my life! The whole process of cooking in the bread oven was really awesome, and ever since

I've wanted to build one.

Coldwater was born out of an idea that I encountered when I was travelling, the bus "Everybody's Kitchen." (They started in California, had a bus and were just sharing food all over the country.) That motivated me to ... whatever gave me the crazy idea to want to get a bus, I don't know! Two days with no sleep and the delirium ...

Coldwater was our way of contributing. We couldn't be there all the time, but we were like, "Hey, this is what we have to offer." Pretty much what we were trying to accomplish was providing one decent meal a week, of something that was nutritious ... It was also really awesome to see the amount of support we got from the co-ops, for us to gather food for Coldwater. After about a month we had this huge store of dried goods and food, just sitting around.

Every Sunday was something out of the ordinary! Particular stories are hard to come by. Cooking all night was always mayhem, sometimes frustrating, for the most part very rewarding.

I remember getting to camp on Sunday and having everyone come, "Thank you, thank you!" The first couple times I was there I was so overwhelmed by that! "I'm just a cook, I'll hide over here ..."

One of my favorite things about camp was, despite all the drawbacks and risks, there was so much positive energy there, it was difficult to worry about the risks. I remember thinking, "This is so wonderful! How can anything possibly go wrong?"

For me personally, getting involved in Coldwater and finding all that positive energy pretty much saved me, from serious drug addiction. Doing Coldwater made me feel incredible, the more I did it, for that year and a half; it was an awesome thing. There was a real sense of family there; even if you didn't like someone, you had to take care of them ... your survival depended on it. Another thing that really inspired me was the young people. I was just amazed at how much they accomplished, how motivated they were, even as 15 and 16 year olds, full on, "This is what I'm doing!" Camp really helped people grow a lot, and people helped camp grow. Also the diversity really amazed me, people who were so different in their natural lives, but would get together to make something better.

After the Free State my energy remained with Coldwater, and for a while we provided the space for everyone to get together in one place. But there was a void, and camp was really what made Coldwater go. The best times I remember were at camp. Just to get that positive feedback and to give something to camp as a whole, to help make sure it stayed there in a small way. After the Free State, Coldwater was just cooking for itself; which was rewarding, but it wasn't for anything else. After a while it became so unruly because we couldn't decide where to serve, or what to cook, or anything! Another problem was that half the people would just sit around and drink, which was fun, but it also detracted from trying to cook. That was about the time that I finally left Coldwater, 'cause I saw the focus was gone. It didn't inspire me as much at that time.

After that I felt a big void in my life ... I went and did activist stuff and that was really great for me too, but it wasn't camp, and it didn't fulfill what I was looking, for ... also I didn't have the energy to put into it. After Coldwater ended I was very tired, and I needed some time, just to deal and put things into perspective ... even now, I'm still kind of at a crossroads in my life, not really sure what to put my energy into ...

Methane

For now, the business of the Free State is building. To a generation raised on the mythology of Star Wars, the idea of an Ewok Village is a compelling fantasy. The one pallet treesit and the batting cage we've strung up were no comparison, but these weren't redwoods, this wasn't Emdor, and I was closer to a Mexican hairless than an Ewok.

Grey Duck is constructing an ambitious and ambiguous sleeping quarters designed around the concept of a tipi, more precisely an octagonal cone chopped off about ten feet high. I help him out when I can, one Free State Villa to another, and know enough to keep my mouth shut with regards to the possibility of modifying the design to certain parameters of structural and pragmatic sanity. Those concerns are always nebulous when it comes to someone's pets.

The treesits were an exercise in icicles. My regular help was off funking up logging roads up north and fur conventions out east, and anything else the demented adrenaline junkies could hatch in those beaded seashelled dreadlock nests. Their absence gave me the opportunity to work with the new blood. Star is a young buck, formerly a junkie on Hollywood boulevard and a lockdown at Little Alfie last year. He is considered not entirely reliable, or more precisely, "definitely the wingnut of the Little Alfie equation," but he seems to be working on his karma with diligence, and that inspires patience, at least where I'm concerned.

The other was Poky, a six-foot-one lesbian up from Austin, Texas, formerly of Chicago. She gave me her whole activist resume hanging 50 feet up in negative 20, with the kind of wind chill that makes you feel like the whole top of the tree is going to snap off like some giant, frostbitten hand, and makes the toes of your boots seem like ice cube trays.

"I worked with Queer Nation for a while, and Act Up."

" Act up? We stormed the head of city council's office in city hall this spring to protest an anti-homeless bill and Act Up people totally impressed me with their crowd control. Their energy was infectious. They electrified the crowd."

"Yeah, Act Up is pretty well known. They organize lots of groups that aren't typically reached, women, Blacks, poor people."

"Of course, those are the groups heaviest hit by AIDS in Philly and everywhere else I guess."

"I'm a Lesbian Avenger too."

"You're a Lesbian Avenger." I'm incredulous.

"You know the Avengers?"

"I didn't know they were real. I was doing a film documentary for a feminist film criticism class in Baltimore, and I walked up to a bunch of dykes and asked them some lame open-ended question about feminism and one of them said they were the Lesbian Avengers. That was the first I'd heard of them, and I asked if that meant they were gonna kick my ass. They laughed and said no they weren't really the Avengers."

"We're real alright."

"What do Lesbian Avengers do?"

"Regular militant gay stuff. A lot of billboard liberation. And spontaneous events. One time in downtown Chicago there were about 20 of us just hanging out, and we all got totally naked and started blowing fire. The police freaked, they didn't know what to do. They just hovered over the parking lot in a helicopter and watched."

"20 nude lesbians in a parking lot blowing fire? Now that's a party I'd like to get invited to!" We inch down the tree according to our respective preferences, she prussics and I tree hug, the same as I did when I got in and out of my first tree fort in the back yard when I was a kid. I beat her to the bottom, but if I fall, it's for keeps.

Walking back to the RV is reminiscent of walking on stilts in that same childhood memory. Back at the RV, I wish I could break my toes out of their trays and put them in a glass of hot tea to melt.

* * *

The biggest problem with the treesits was that they were just too goddamn cold.

It was Sunday night and a raid rumor came down the pipes faithful as the saints. Jimmy activates the phone list and I look around at the night shift. 11 total. Jimmy and Bear for the Native contingent. The animal rights kids, their body language telling me that they'd finally found each other in the night. It seemed a natural liaison to everyone else, but now she looks at me like one lying wounded.

For second timers, it's them and Aaron, and me. Everyone else is new blood. Where are my people I wonder. Poetry creeps in with the snow- the coalition shattered, the resistance broken, the partisans in hiding- fleeting in snowy shadows I sense the ghost of Che Guevera, gasping, asthmatic, bleeding, hunted through the Bolivian countryside.

Poky and Star, eager to work the trees despite the darkness and cold, determined to make a stand, however desperate and alone. Freedom winds scarlet yarn around the trunks of trees, a futile gesture in the face of bulldozers, but I'm told it does wonderful things to chainsaws. Italy's here too, and ready to spend the night in the trees. The net falls to her and Aaron. Freedom wants to join them, but Italy draws the line at two, no telling what the weight limit really is, but more than two seems overkill anyway. Star volunteers for the platform, with Poky running ground support. I tell Freedom, Poison and Natalia the four of us will climb the sacred trees after the others are all secured in their positions. Delays and safety concerns run us late into the night. I fall asleep in the RV with Star in his perch and the other two in sleeping bags in the great hammock in the sky.

I wake in the early hours of the morning to Poky calling me. "Methane. Italy froze up in the net. She's trying to get down but I'm afraid she's gonna fall because she can't use her hands."

I pull on my boots as fast as I can and rush out into the woods. I get there in time to meet her at the base of the tree, panicked, frozen and shaken. I walk her back to the RV. "My hands are so cold..." her voice trails off in desperation. I take her hands and put them under all my layers and onto my stomach.

"It's the world's best handwarmer," I offer. The same one that saved my own hands so many times before.

We take each other's bodies for blankets in the darkness, and sleep warm until the morning. The light greets my conscious like a sigh of relief, the same as other mornings I thought I might not see. But the sigh is half contained, the danger still hovers on the fringes of the morning. At noon we breath deep again, we laugh and celebrate, another victory of survival.

Star comes down from the platform, exhausted and mildly frostbitten, unable to keep warm. Aaron is totally unresponsive to my shouts from below. I climb the tree as rapidly as I can manage, fearing the worst. I climb into the net to find him groggy, sleepy and slightly annoyed to be woken up at such an ungodly noonish hour. I laugh with the ecstacy that comes from the release of tension.

"Hey man do you want to come down?"

"No."

"Do you want anything, are you hungry, thirsty?"

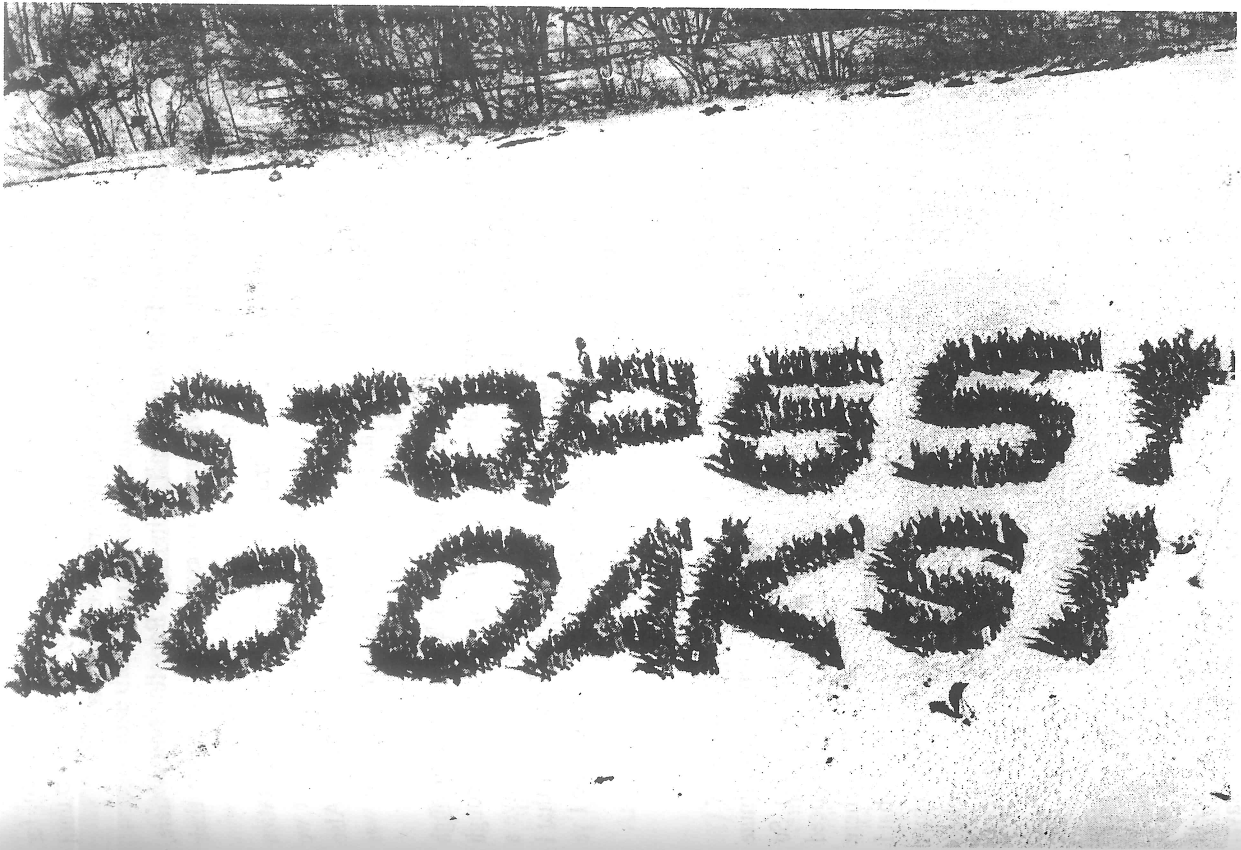
"No, I'm fine, lemme sleep."

"Alright man." To everyone's surprise, he refused to come down all day. It was just when consensus was turning to the idea that his judgement must be impaired from hypothermia and I should force him to come down since I'm his cousin, that I went back to find his nest empty, him off picking supplies up with Grey Duck.

Freedom

From the time of the setup of the second camp until somewhere in May, not many people knew what was going on down at camp. It was frigid cold and there were few people there. We all knew that the warm weather would bring more people, and we were patient. I remember being focused and consumed by basic things; keeping warm, cooking and eating, security.

A couple notable things happened. There was an archaeological dig conducted by MNDoT. They dug a bunch of holes in the woods, about six feet by four feet by six feet deep, and proclaimed the site neither historic nor culturally important. We debated about whether to sabotage


STOP SST!
GO OAKS!

the effort on pure principle, but were advised against it.

Also the infamous STOP 55 GO OAKS picture was taken, for which more people showed up than any other Highway 55 event up until or since then! People like getting their picture taken, we said.

Somebody's good idea. That was a really fun day! People everywhere, happy to be tromping in the snow, happy to create and visualize their passion together.

It was also a time of building. Structures, barricades, the reputation and validity of camp. The longer we were there, the more support we had and the more comfortable we were in our reclaimed space. Also relationships were built up. They take a while to get strong, so it was good we had the time.

The combination of getting to know people at camp through everyday rhythms, and the bond that our hearts and spirits shared through that land and protecting it, has made me personally feel that I have a connection with those people that will be with me until I die, and that I could never have with anyone else. It is a feeling reminiscent of one I've heard veterans of war speak of.

Jim Anderson

I went to work one day. (Work was really hard then, every minute I was there I felt like I was being tore away from where I had to be.) So I'm at work, and I go to the tool crib, which is where we go if we need parts. There's a big stainless steel counter, like a bar, or something. There was nothing on this stainless steel top when I got there. I told him what I needed, and he went back, and I look down and there's this perfectly white squirrel skull, sitting on the counter! I got it in my van right now. I picked it up and started looking at it, thinking, 'Where the hell did this come from? I didn't see it when I come up, somebody must have put it here.'

So the guy comes back with his stuff and says, "What do you got there?" I says, "I don't know, I found it right here." He said, "No you didn't, it wasn't here." I said, "Yeah it was, it was laying right there." He goes, "No it wasn't!!" I say, "I don't even know what it is!" I thought it was a rat skull or something. Then he flipped it over, and the little teeth continually grow on a squirrel, they're way up in their heads. He says, "It's a squirrel skull." Right there I thought 'Wow.' He was looking at it, and I said, "Can I have it back?" He gave it to me.

I knew there was something weird happening there, to me, because of fighting for the trees. A lot of people have a spirit power, like the bear and moose, and mountain lion. I'm the squirrels! That's my medicine now, 'cause the Squirrel Nation came to me, and asked for help. I talked to Chris Leith about it and he laughed. I said, "What?" He said, "Sometimes the spirits will give you presents to show you that you ain't going crazy, that these things do happen." So that's part of my medicine now, not the bear, but the squirrel! (Laughs) It was beautiful.

The Traditional Cultural Property Act

Annie Mohler

Diane and I researched and learned about the Native American aspect of it, that it had always been sacred land. So we decided to try and get a Traditional Cultural Property Act, which would mean, [to put it simply], that aspect would be recognized and retained, and that the Native American people would be in charge of the land.

Diane Steen-Hinderlie

I joined the Green Party in June of 1997, and they were all concerned with the stuff down there [at Minnehaha]. So I went down there, and started getting more and more involved. I thought this [lobbying] was something I could contribute, because they were always butting into dead ends. Mary Jo Iverson had tried to contact people over at the Capitol, but even Karen Clark refused to talk to her. They're kind of middle-of-the-road people over there, and they don't want to associate with fringe elements because they're worried about their electoral possibilities. They want things to get a little bit more mainstream before they'll touch them. But I thought especially after that huge police action in December of '98, when I heard about how they treated Dick Bancroft, an elderly photographer, [something had to be done].

So Karen Clark was throwing an open house, and I was on her mailing list. I went to it. I was kind of emotional. I said, "I have a flyer for the Walker Church, they're going to have a speak-out about what happened." She kind of acted as if she hadn't heard about it at all, but maybe she had. She knew me, so she said she would really try to make it. She came to that. I was very impressed that she came to that. She really was impressed with the singer, Jessica. So Karen Clark kind of came on board after that speak-out. She started meeting with Jim Anderson and other people. I thought that now there would be a chink with light coming through for us over there.

I went over on January 6th of 1999 and met with Pat Piper. She was very nice, and started doing little things. Bob Greenberg did the kickoff for us on Feb. 23rd; we had a big lobby day. So often people go have a big day on the hill, and then never go back, but I knew you had to keep going [back]. Women are known for endurance. There were four of us who just were there all the time. Two of them were working outside of home, and they would come after [work]. Anne Mohler and I stayed all day.

Somebody from the Mendota gave us little buffalo drawings. They dubbed us four the Warrior Women, and we each got an Indian name then. I was "The Traveler," because the bills are long, 11x14, and I had a roller suitcase. (That was the one that Scoglund [jumped on]. [He] pulled over a Channel Four photographer and said, "How do we know what's in her suitcase?" He made me open it up for the news media, and said I might be trying to poison the legislature with the gallon of spring water that I had in there. Though my face wasn't broadcast, I felt violated, but I was too busy to pursue that.)

Mary Weitz

My name is Mary Weitz, and I was born in Minneapolis. I grew up partially in Golden Valley, because my family had a farm out in Golden valley, when they still had roosters and chickens. We were only seven miles from Minneapolis.

When I went to the University of Minnesota it was the late sixties, and the Civil Rights movement was going strongly, I had even gotten involved in that in high school. I got drawn into the anti-war movement [as well]. I'd have to say during those years at the University, what went on outside the classroom was more important than what went on inside the classroom.

So I guess that's a part of what I grew up with, although, if I look back at my own family, my father was kind of a very conservative person, he was a member of the John Birch Society, he was anti-communist …

I adopted two girls from India, being a single parent. There's a lot to raising kids, and juggling a job, and daycare, and their school ... You do a lot of driving and you try and supplement their education if you don't feel they're getting as much of a rounded education at school. So I was pretty involved in that for a number of years, and not too politically involved in anything. I got a little involved in the education of my kids.

I used to vote all the time, I always went to the primaries and the main elections and everything... I was starting to feel, in the city of Minneapolis, more and more that politicians weren't listening to us, and there were things that, if you were gonna try and fix them, I'd bring the attention up at our local neighborhood group. There were certain things that [the politicians] were just sort of in denial about or resistant to changing. When they're running, you sort of feel that they might represent you, but then they get elected and it seems they're representing other interests.

So I first learned about the Highway 55 situation from the newspaper, and I thought I should go check it out. This was in September 98. Where I grew up in Golden Valley was right off of 55, so I thought, "Highway 55! Maybe I better see what's going on here." And there were issues that I had never heard about with the trees and the land that they were taking.

So I went down there and Susu gave me a tour of the area. At the camp itself, this is the old camp where the houses were, it seemed like if you go down there there was a always a group of people you could talk to. They had petitions going, they had all sorts of ways that they were trying to get the word out on how we could stop this road, or have the road change so it would do the minimal amount of damage in that area. Especially considering that there was already a road there. It seemed pretty direct that they could've just used that road instead of starting a new one. Also I started to get more of an awareness of what the Native American issues were, because they were very strongly involved in this issue. They had tipis set up there, and they also were giving talks and lectures on what this land meant to them and how important it was in their culture and their history.

So, for the first part, I would just come down, and a lot of times I'd bring food, and we would try to get the word out to people, about what was going on, try to make them aware. I know I called up my politicians to try to see if they could help. At that time they weren't listening too carefully, they didn't think this was a big issue, that this was too important.

Then the raid came, in December. There had been some confrontation with the police before that, but this was really major, with hundreds of police officers.

People started to organize a political action down at the State Capitol to introduce legislation to try and save this area. They asked everybody to come down and talk to their legislative representatives. So I remember I signed up, and there were a lot of us that went down. Before I went to talk to my representative I went with a group of people, just to get an idea; I had never lobbied before.

The first meeting was with John Marty. He was a very bright senator. He knew a lot about the roads, and about the designs, and he knew that there were alternatives that they could've taken that they weren't. He informed us a lot about how the LRT was involved, and about how there was so much federal money certain politicians were trying to secure so they could build this LRT. Although, as it turned out, as much money as they secured, maybe what they secured was 25% of what the final cost is. The actual cost of this LRT has gone way above and beyond what anybody had imagined. There's a lot of misleading things.

We, with the help of the Mendota lawyers, put together a bill, which we started to work on to make it into law. Karen Clark was one of the first people to come forward, and she authored it. This bill was to declare this area a Traditional Cultural Property, which would bring the state protection up to the federal protection.

A different story...

So we introduced this bill, and in the process, the Mendota Mdewakanton brought together at least a dozen spiritual elders form various tribes, and they testified at the capital for two full days, about the very special nature of this area, and its' religious significance. It was wonderful in that we got to hear a history of Minnesota that I had never been exposed to in any classroom, or saw in any textbook, and this was the oral history of the Native American people, and what this place meant to them. It had to do with their creation stories and it had to do with their really fundamental beliefs about who they were as a people, and how special this particular area was, being at the confluence of the Mississippi and

Minnesota river, also with the spring there ... They brought photographs that showed prayer circles, and you could see tipis all along the area that we were trying to protect. I thought the proof was just overwhelming, as to how wonderful the place was. The people from MNDoT even put on the shawl that was presented to them, and we thought that they would really listen to these words and they would do the right thing.

So the Native people were meeting with the MNDoT leaders, trying to negotiate where this road would go and how it should be built. On the other hand there were several of us who were working to get this law passed. We were moving it through committees. We got it through a House committee, it was passed. We had historians come down. This movement sort of attracted a really wide range of people: people who cared about history, people who cared about water, people who cared about the environment, Native American people who cared about their history and their spiritual background, young people who know that you have to save certain things ...

[People said], we can't just do everything in the name of progress, we have to preserve things or our children won't even know ... the planet is going to be so changed over, that some of the very special and wonderful things could be gone, and some of them have already been destroyed. People came forward telling about the Big Medicine Spring at Theodore Wirth Park, how MNDoT put in 394 and that was destroyed. They told stories about how Powderhorn had been a wonderful lake at one time, fed by a spring, and now it was, by the figures, one of the most polluted dead lakes in Minneapolis, because they killed the spring, and the water, I don't know, it's become very toxic. You hear too many stories like this. True, populations grow and people move in, but we have to take care of our water and think in longer terms, and be more careful about the land, and then we will preserve it.

A staunch opponent ...

Down at the legislature, some people wouldn't even listen to us. They had already made up their minds, and they thought 'Well, this road is needed.' MNDoT was very strong at the time. As far as a state agency goes, they're very strong. They have a huge budget, and they really don't have to answer to even the legislators to some degree because, every time you put a gallon of gas in your car, a certain amount of the state tax goes directly to MNDoT to maintain roads. Also, if they do something wrong, for example if they destroy something in the process of making a road, and people come and sue them, then the state attorney provides lawyers for them, and those are paid for by our tax dollars. So, it's very formidable to go up against MNDoT and try to tell them how they should build roads and what they should do.

There's federal guidelines that are maybe stronger than a lot of the state guidelines, but to try to get them enforced is very difficult. We tried to put an injunction on the road to stop construction so they could do the proper studies, traditional cultural property studies and do the true history, and they basically said that we had to have a bond, because they had already contracted workers to make this road, and we had to put up the cost of the road! Citizens, no matter how many concerned citizens there are, do not have millions and millions of dollars to put up bond money, unless you're that powerful, and then you could probably just stop the road.

"I thought we were making inroads."

We kept talking to the legislators, and we had quite a calling list. We had people constantly coming over. It was pretty amazing, because I was down there and sometimes somebody would say, "We got 300 phone calls that were logged." Because the word was going out. We had a petition that 14,000 people signed, saying that they don't want them to build this road.

There were some people more concerned than others. There were some people that thought it would be too expensive if it stopped, if they pulled the plug on the road right now. We had problems with the people who were the chairs of the transportation committees. Tom Workman didn't want to give us a hearing in the House, and Carol Flynn tried to prevent a hearing in the Senate. Somehow they were tied in, MNDoT had already gotten to them, and they had already made up their mind. No matter how many phone calls, or people called them, or tried to tell them that they were against this, they didn't listen to them, they just went ahead ... and it was frustrating, because we managed to move past some committees, but you need a hearing to get it onto the floor. We actually did have some supporters that got it on the floor for discussion, made pleas that, "You know, there are people here, and you should listen to them, and know what they're trying to do instead of just making up your mind." Gary Ledig made a plea for us. Then Ellen Anderson authored our bill in the Senate.

The trouble with pies

Then there was a time when Carol Flynn, who was the chairwoman of the transportation committee, was trying to prevent this bill from being heard in her transportation committee and we knew this, but we somehow felt that the tide would turn. This is a pretty undemocratic process, when you've gone through the procedure and you've got something that's a very popular people's movement, for someone not to hear it ... So people [in the legislature] were starting almost to feel sorry for us.

So we could feel that there was a great amount of support, and that it should be heard and voted on like everything else. Then, we were waiting, and hoping that these people would change their mind, when a member of our coalition came down to the Capitol and threw a pie at Carol Flynn, and caused just an uproar. I was there that day, and I stood next to this man, and I had no idea what his plan was. He did an act, which I guess they were doing out in California. California has a lot of causes, and it seems like a lot of the people in power turned a deaf ear to the people, and the media stopped listening and the media stopped reporting on it, so they'd fling some pies.

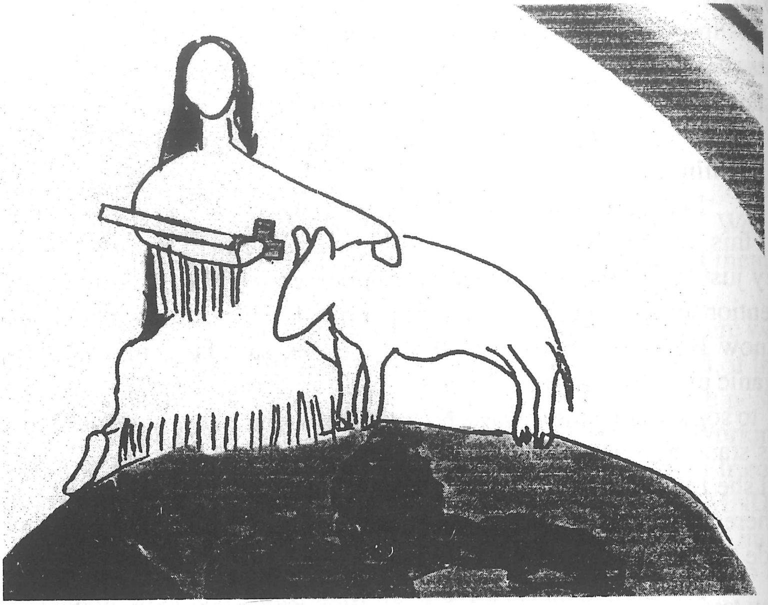
In the case of Carol Flynn, she was a sixty-some-year-old woman, and this, for Native American people, was more than an embarrassment, they just felt, "She is an elder, who deserves respect. You don't get her attention, or try to get her to change her mind, by doing an act of violence." I know Bob Greenberg, who threw the pie, said he gently pushed this organic pie into her face, which, as gentle as it was, did represent a violent act to some. Then there was a Native elder woman, Darlene Jackson, who was standing on the steps. When Bob got pushed back, he fell into her and she fell down some steps, and she had to go to the emergency ward, so here's another elder woman who was injured. Carol Flynn, mainly her pride was injured more than anything else.

The pie did not succeed to do what Bob Greenberg hoped it to do, to get her to change her mind or to pay attention. [Instead] she utilized this, to her advantage. So where at first, to the onlooker, she was doing things to us that were undemocratic, now all of a sudden she was a victim of a violent act. People who had supported us, people who put their names as co-authors on our bill, wanted to remove themselves. They said, if you're affiliated with this ..." I said, "Well, we're a big organization. We weren't aware, that this was going on," and they said, "Well, you've gotta be more aware. You have to take that responsibility."

* * *

We never did succeed that session, and unfortunately the road was built, and took the trees ... I mean, we worked a lot to try and prevent that, and I guess it was a huge disappointment to a lot of us.

Then the Native people who were working in dialogue with MNDoT; I don't know a lot of the details of what went on, but I know they



Little buffalo drawing given to women lobbyists for their efforts in getting the State to listen to the Native elders.

felt very betrayed by MNDoT. They felt that MNDoT had made some concessions, and went against what they said. In their eyes, MNDoT was not credible, because the promises they made, they broke.

CHAPTER ELEVEN
The Elders Speak

All along, city and state officials had been asking for proof that the land in question was sacred. The Native people kept saying, "Our traditions are oral, our proof is the words of our elders." At long last, the State Legislature agreed to hear the testimony of elders from around the country, as part of the studies for the Traditional Cultural Property Assessment. What follows are excerpts from the court records of those two days.

"It's very important that you hear from our teachers. It's very important that you hear from those that are messengers that have a direct link between the creator and ourselves. These are our Ph.D.s."

-Michael Haney

"Nemadji (phonetic) is our highest attribute of life, and that is honor, dignity and respect. It's hard for me to determine whether it's good or bad to build a road through a park where our people lived a long time ago because I most invariably think about that in spiritual terms, but more so in terms of nemadji; honor, dignity and respect.

-Eugene Begay

And you said "I'm tired, I don't have anything to eat, I don't know how to live, but I'm here because I want to be free to practice my own sacred ways." And like the judgment in Matthew, when the creator says, "When have you seen me lonely and came there for me," when did we see you cold and homeless, we taught you how to live here. I think that's what should be kept in mind.

-Reverend Gary Cavender

Chris Leith

Dakota spiritual leader, from Prairie Island Reservation

(Native American Language spoken.) Thank you very much. First of all before I start, I'm going to pray because that's our life. Our life is a prayer. We all must ask the creator of the four directions and above and below to join us in a time of need. I'm going to ask all of you know if you know your language, pray in your language. Make it strong. I use my language that was given to me at the time of birth to communicate with the supernatural powers. Every one of us has a language, regardless of what nationality or tribe we're from, given to us at the time of birth. That's why we encourage people to go back to their roots, so they will understand what life is about.

We doctor with medicine, with water. We pray with it, ask the water spirits to help us that we may grow up and be healthy. That's why we're so protective of that spring, it comes up from Mother Earth, and is pure, innocent and powerful, the cleansing power between heaven and earth. Without water, nothing will grow and we will suffer, we will die. I thank my nephew for bringing this water. I wasn't planning on using this water, but somebody put it in my mind that's what we should do, to pray in our ceremony that asks our grandparents of the spirit world to help us look after, help the people understand what life is all about.

When I was out there at that site, we had ceremony, and we were told that (Native American language spoken), years ago there was a Dakota village there. Some of them died there in burial grounds. Some of them suffered, and that's when the army held them prisoner and killed them, murdered them. The little children were used for target practice. The soldiers would pretend to play with the little children, tell them to run, and when they're running, they'd shoot them. Those are the kind of stories that we have to live with. Our women raped, shot. Whenever a soldier was trying to find out who created the Sioux uprising in 1862, when they interrogate one of our elders and he couldn't speak English or understand English, they shoot him. Those are the kind of situations we have to live with. You don't find them in history books, but yet the village that was there, they were taking care of that sacred site. That's the reason they had a village there. My grandparents talked about that. Ahona (phonetic), meaning a long time ago, all along the Minnesota River there was a village. They were taking care of that place.

My grandmother used to tell me the Ojibwa and Dakota lived together in a large village over by St. Croix. She remembers when she was a little girl they used to go over there. They lived together and helped one another, food and things like that. History books tell us they were always in battle, but that's not true.

Nobody has ever heard our side of the story. None of our people ever write books because our teaching is oral, it doesn't come from books. So when you talk about things like that, nobody believes us because it was not documented, it never happened, that's their belief.

* * *

Today we call progress destruction. We're not here to destroy anything. We're here to take care of it the way it was meant to be from the beginning of time. It is gone too long now, and now it's time for us to speak up and help people understand so we can make life better. So the sacredness of life is more important than money, we need to turn it around. I know people, contractors, want to make money, that's why they are so set on destroying that place. But there's other ways to survive.

So all we're asking is to join together, take another look at what we're doing, to improve it in a sacred manner. Take that back to your churches and talk about it. You want to be a good Christian, have compassion. Go up on that mountain and vision quest for four days and four nights like I did and you will understand what life is about. You will get messages to help people, not to destroy them or condemn them or deport them or whatever, but to work together.

The time has come to create togetherness so we can live in harmony. That's where we're at now. We're in the midst of a big change, living by the prophecies. The prophecies state that the four colors of man will come together and worship. I used to wonder how that was ever going to happen. So my elders told me to go back and help those that are willing to listen, those from different countries that come over here and now want to know.

* * *

When I sat down here, I had no idea what I was going to talk about, but that's what I was told to share so the people will understand. Sometimes I talk about things I didn't even know I knew because while I was talking, I was being told what to say because that's what the people need to know. It's a good experience, my friend. We have those talents and abilities, but we don't look inside. Look deep inside and we're going to find something you never knew you had.

I can go on and on and on, but that's all I'm going to share today. I hope you have some understanding. If you don't, pray about it. It will come, it will come. Simple. And there are probably questions in your mind that you want to be answered, and you will be ... I know it happens to me many times. I'll have a question, I'll go to all the elders in the world and they cannot answer, but they [the spirits] will tell me. It's so simple that I actually feel stupid. But yet they say I'm not stupid. You're innocent because you don't know, and that's good. You are not stupid or ignorant. We're all innocent because we didn't know, and that's the understanding.

So I hope we have that understanding and can do something about it, and I know it can be done. We can work together so everybody can be happy and enjoy, have the biggest celebration because that road can be put someplace else. Do we really need the road? That's the question. I'll leave that with you.

Reverend Gary Cavender

Dakota elder and retired episcopal priest

There is something more to onea (phonetic) than roads and buildings and money. This earth is alive, it is our mother. It has a soul and a spirit and we have that soul and spirit in us because we are all related. You go out and see a beautiful sunset or a beautiful bird that goes beyond your capacity to take it in and the only thing you can do is cry from the beauty and give thanks to God for the opportunity to experience that. That's better, that's more than a road.

What you're planning to do is going to disturb all of that cycle. No matter what precautions you take to save the (Native American term) and his roadway to the river, you're going to stop that. I heard them say well, if we do, we'll put city water in there and make it appear like ... you can't do that. That would be another lie. That would be another untruth.

In our way, the spirit of the water is there in that sacred spring, and we give thanks to that spirit for water. The purification of life is water. And if we pollute that, we pollute ourselves. If we stop it, we stop that water cycle, that cycle of life, and who knows what will happen. Maybe we'll die. Maybe if we just keep it up like we're doing with disregard to the sacredness of life, to the sacredness of that cycle, to the sacredness of all that is, perhaps the finality of us will be death.

You know, I'm a dreamer and I have visions. I shouldn't be telling you this because I also have PTSD and so they think I'm nuts already. But I dreamt one time that the whole earth was destroyed, there was nothing. And the spirit being came and we went all around the earth and saw nothing but death and destruction. Then all the powers and the symbols of power were on the ground powerless. And this being said to me, "Too bad they all had to die. Now there's nobody to mourn."

Is that going to be our way? We have to stop the madness. There is a way we can live in harmony. We're not the king. We're merely a part of the creation. We're not at the top of the food scale, we're not at the bottom. We're there, we're here in creation. There is no food chain, there is only balance. And this will disrupt the balance.

We've disrupted the balance to a point now in some places that maybe we've changed the cycle there and destroyed it. But if we keep doing it and doing it and doing it, maybe that dream I had will be prophetic. Maybe we'll just be here and nobody will be here to mourn. So think about this and think about it hard. When we are dead, what good is a road? If there's nobody to mourn, what good is a light rail system? (Native American language spoken.) Thank you.

Don Wanatee

Meskwaki elder and Thunder Clan chief

Your whole body is filled with water. You drink, you wash your face, your hands, cleanse yourself. You even breathe it. Every time you breathe, that's spiritual. The air is spiritual. Everything is spiritual in this world, except the pollution. I don't think even a spirit could live in pollution. But this is what I'm trying to say, to make you understand there is sacredness about this life that we're leading and living at the present time.

I was talking to somebody about the ceremony. We have ten places. One is the headwaters of the Mississippi; when we pray during this water ceremony, that is what we talk about. There's a spirit that resides there, watches over the headwaters of the Mississippi. That's in Itasca. We travel up there, offer tobacco once a year. Then we stop by here on our way up. And they call these (Native American term). There's two that sit here. There's one on this side and one on the opposite side of the Minnesota River as it is (Native American term), where it enters the Mississippi. There's two there. Then there's one at the Wisconsin River where it enters as a tributary of the Mississippi, there's one there. The next one is Des Moines River as it flows across Iowa from the state of Minnesota. It almost touches the Minnesota River, by the way. Then there's another one, the Missouri enters and the Illinois River also enters the same area. There's two there. Then the Ohio river, and then the Arkansas River, and then the one who is the keeper, the spiritual keeper, Wanadua (phonetic), she is a woman who watches all nations.

Michael Haney

Representing tribes formerly residing in the area including the Twin Cities, before they were relocated to Oklahoma

I just want you to know that we're very happy to have this opportunity. We've waited 157 years for this opportunity to sit down and talk to you about what's important to us, why we feel that the waters need to be clean and pure and why we feel that certain areas need to be protected, although they don't comply with the standard this state has towards what's sacred, what's spiritual. And to help provide that understanding, we've asked this array of traditional people, spiritual people, activists, public gangsters. I'd like to pause at this point and let you know that we have some people in here that are not Native people but still are very important in our struggle.

I was given a great honor yesterday in a ceremony, and I understood later it's because we are protecting a sacred area, an area that's sacred to the Meskwaki people, and they don't know us Mendota or the Earth First! people or the activists that are assembled in the room here. And I realize that what we were merely doing was fulfilling the prophecy that essentially said, when the Meskwaki people aren't here, the creator will send some people to take care of these areas to protect them from any harm. And as long as the Meskwaki people do these ceremonies and ask the spirits to protect these areas, the spirits will find people like me and the people behind me and around you to protect these things.

* * *

So this story goes like this: There was a young priest who was assigned to the Pueblo people and he was out in the cemetery cleaning, like your customs are, cleaning the grave sites on Memorial Day or something like that. Go over there, make a little picnic of it, go eat, go clean the grave a little bit and remember us. It's a good tradition. But while this young person was out weeding the graves and doing what he had to do and put some flowers on this grave, he noticed over across the cemetery, he noticed there was a tribal elder. The tribal elder was putting food out on a grave where one of these leaders had passed on a year or so ago. And so with a little bit of disdain on his face, the young priest challenged the elder and said, "Just when do you think they're going to come up and eat that food?" He thought it was outrageous to put food on the grave. The tribal elder looked at the food, looked over at the priest and he says, "Oh, I guess the same time they come up and smell your flowers."

The point is that both ways are good, both ways are embraced by that particular people and community, both ways of worshipping the creator and paying respects to those who have gone on into the spirit world is healthy. But it illustrates a gap between the two cultures. This is what we have here gentlemen. There's a gap in the understanding of spiritual ways by the state of Minnesota, and often what it appears to be is a failure of us to have you understand.

It's these ceremonies that make us Indian, it's these ceremonies that's our identification. And once we lose these, we will cease to become, in my opinion, children of God in a way because as long as we are continuing these ceremonies, we're just like that bird out there that sings that beautiful song. The creator gave that song to the bird and that bird is still singing and the creator is taking care of that bird and his relatives, telling him when to go, what to eat, providing for them.

As long as they're singing that song, that language, worshipping the creator in the way that was given to him, to his ancestors, that's taken care of. I can see that. I know that as long as we take care of our pipe, our medicine bottles, as long as we take care of these ceremonies and these dances and these sacred places that we're talking about, then we too will be taken care of.

If we fail to attempt to protect these things, we will suffer the consequences. That's why we can't allow you to destroy that. We can't sit idly by and watch these trees be destroyed. That's why we're here.

Lisa Bellanger

Anishinabe

Today we are presenting to you on behalf of the Anishinabe Midewiwin women. You might think of us as Ojibwa, but we are Anishinabe, from the beginning of time. We thank you for the opportunity to speak for the water and share with you the teaching of that water.

My sisters and I belong to the traditional Anishinabe Midewiwin Society, Three Fires Society, representing Anishinabe, Ottawa and Potawatomi Nations. We reside in the Twin Cities and even amidst the concrete, the noise and the pollution, we continue to carry out our responsibilities as Anishinabe women, which is to pray for the water, to lift the water and to share the water with the people.

Today we have shared water with all of you, and that water is from Coldwater Spring. What is the significance of water? What is the teaching of water? Well, water is sacred because water is life. Without water, Mother Earth cannot sustain life. Without water, women cannot give life. Our children travel into this world in a bag of water. It is the water that one truly cannot go without.

According to Anishinabe teachings, we are told that in the sky realm in the great beyond there is a beautiful, shining, never-ending, everlasting, pure, sparkling, sacred and healing body of water. It is this water, the spirit of that water in the sky world which we call upon in our blessing songs. One song, wah wah sigomee, gi shee soo, says we would like just a little taste, just a little drop of that beautiful healing water. That's all we ask. It is through this sacred ceremony in which our women stand up for the water, lift the water and ask for that blessing of the water so that we can share it with our families, with our people. And it is that sacred water, that life water, which brings healing, pure strength, to our people.

We are also reminded in that song with the water ceremony that the water here on Mother Earth is limited, it is not eternal, it is not everlasting, and thus we must stand up and protect the limited water that Mother Earth carries.

We are not asking you to stop progress. We are only asking you to respect the natural law as you move forward in life. And we are not the only people that require water to live. Water is a spiritual commodity across all religions, across all nations, across all colors. Water is sacred, water is life. (Native American language spoken.)

Doreen Day

Anishinabe

(Native American language spoken.) My English name is Doreen Day. I am a teacher at the Guadalupe Alternative Program School on the west side of St. Paul. I want to share a few things with you that relate to our younger generation because I'm the mother of six children. So my work in life is to prepare them for their lives and their children's lives and their grandchildren's lives. So that's my interest and that's what I would like to speak with you about today.

When I was a teenager, I was fortunate to have an Iroquois midwife relate to me the teachings of birth. She taught me about the sacredness of water. She sang the songs and recited the prayers that are used in giving birth. All of them included water. The ceremony of birth is recognizing the sacredness of water, our ties to Mother Earth and our cycles as Native women.

In this city, I am living as traditional as I can. My children know their creation story. They are second generation removed from chemical dependency that was of my father. They attend sweat lodges, ceremonies. Cultural and spiritual is the environment that I would describe that they live in, even though we live in the city of St. Paul.

So I've stated that I am a mother. I'm a mother of four daughters and two sons. I have taken my daughters to the Cold Springs. They are 20 years old, 13, 10 and three. They have sung these songs. At one ceremony at the Sacred Trees, my three-year-old daughter has her own copper pail and she is already involved in that process because she is doing what I do. So they have sung these songs. As the next generation, they are already taking up their responsibility for the care and preservation of the water. They are the ones that our forefathers thought about. Their grandchildren are the ones that we are thinking of. To them what kind of legacy do we leave?

Sharon Day

Anishinabe

(Native American language spoken.) My legal name is Sharon Day and I'm the executive director of the Minnesota American Indian AIDS Task Force. We knew right away, the three of us, what we wanted to do, and that was to show you the importance of the water to us.

In February we were up in Canada, the three of us, and we had some teachings from some of the grandmothers, and I knew that I felt very strongly about water in general, but about this particular spring as well. So when I came back from Winnipeg, I wanted to, for myself and my sisters, say something about what I had learned and what this water meant to me. And so I wrote this piece of poetry that I'm going to read and it's addressed to my sisters. And although there are no women on your panel, perhaps you will understand this and perhaps the other women in the room will appreciate it as well.

"As I sat and listened to the grandmothers, I began to understand in a profound way my feelings for this spring they call Camp Coldwater. The grandmothers say the women are the ones who care for the water. In our ceremonies, women gather the water. It is we who sing the songs calling for the blessings from the water spirit, the life force that sustains us. The grandmothers spoke of this water that flows through our bodies nurturing us for the months before we enter the world. They spoke of the necessity to care for the water. In the spiritual realm, there is a lake that is never-ending, it has no beginning and no end. This lake is shimmering, brilliant, blue water. It is pure and clear, sacred.

"Now I understand my desire to prevent this road from being built, because the heavy equipment that will be used will destroy the limestone, thus destroying the spring. It is a sacred place. This water bubbles up from the earth and is pure, like medicine as it makes its way through this fragile limestone on its way to the surface of the land. Native people have used this spring since the beginning of time for medicine.

"I wonder what would happen if all of the women of the world would say, 'No more.' If we said to the corporations, the farmers whose pesticides run off into the streams and rivers, to the cities and to the municipalities, 'No more. We will not allow you to continue to pollute our water, the lifeblood of the earth mother.'

"I will say, 'No more' and I will continue to take women one by one, if that's the way it needs to be, to this Camp Coldwater Spring. I watch them as we go. I see the tears running silently down their faces as they gaze at this wondrous spring. There is no need for words. The water spirit speaks to them. Niconidahnah."

Eugene Begay

Anishinabe council member from La Courte Oreilles Reservation

So why did the creator create everything as I just told you in that manner, why was the earth first, why was the vegetation second, why was the animal life, fish and birds, third, why were human beings the fourth and why were the laws the last? If you removed all the animals, birds and fish from the earth, human beings would perish. We would not survive. We are dependant upon the animals. If they're taken away, we will perish for sure.

The birds and the animals and the fish depend on the water that we're talking about. If you removed the vegetation from the earth, the animals, in addition to the human beings, would not survive. And if you removed the earth which contains water and soil, there would be nothing. That is why the order of creation was the earth, the vegetation, the animals, the birds and the fish, and humans lastly. We are the most dependent upon all the others. We are the weakest.

And that is why we have today what we call a spiritual life. We have to have that because we are frail, we are weak and we depend upon the rest of god's creation. That is why you heard this morning amongst my predecessors here, testifying about the importance of spirituality, the importance of the land, the water, the importance of our relationship one onto another.

When someone took ill or someone died, at the time they were traveling maybe on horseback, maybe walking … talking about Anishinabe people … when the person died, they simply wrapped them in birch bark, dug a post hole in the ground enough to receive the body feet first and pointed the face to the west. There was no great ceremony of any kind. There was a prayer that was said, there was some talk about the life of that person, but not for a long time. It wasn't a long talk. There was no marker, no headstone. That was it. The body was returned to Mother Earth where it belonged. But they always remembered where the body was in turn. It was never forgotten. When they came down that road where Grandma was buried, they always stopped and they spent a night there. They sang songs and talked about Grandma and they exchanged gifts.

And so it seems to me as I think about this land that it could quite possibly be a burial ground, unmarked. Why do the Lakota people keep coming back there? Why are we sitting here today asking that it be preserved?

Michael Haney shares an excerpt from a document put together by four tribes that sponsored an indigenous conference of the Americas. In the document, the phrase "little brother" refers to the white race.

"Ideally, all communities would complete their own laws of origin and preserve what they are taught. Unfortunately, little brother has not preserved his law of origin, the Ten Commandments. He has forced his will of slavery and self-obsession on others. He has trespassed the limits of the territory that was assigned to him. He has raped our women, robbed our gold, killed our ancestors and destroyed indigenous cultures in the Americas. Today, even though we are the only pure survivors of his invasion, we continue to complete our law of origin. We do this with the hope that life can be saved and the common good of the universe can be protected.

"We ask you, little brothers, to fulfill your own law of origin, the Ten Commandments. End your domination over other nations and stop your exploitation of nature. All things that were left by man facilitate only their own needs, which often include domination, subjugation and destruction. You have destroyed the land, the air, the water and the very life of man. This is the reason we ask you to reflect on the results of the invention of the great machine. You have made it difficult for us to reestablish the natural course of natural phenomenons and have left us all to live in a world of suffering and desperation."

The Response from the State

MNDoT was court-ordered to do an assessment of the area of the proposed reroute in order to determine whether it qualified to be a Traditional Cultural Property. What follows are several excerpts from this document which speak to MNDoT's conclusions.

Written accounts dating from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries are few and frequently difficult to interpret ... For better or for worse, historians, anthropologists and archaeologists have relied heavily on these accounts in the hope of better understanding the history and culture of Native American groups in the region. To the extent that these historic accounts record first hand observations about the land and it's people, there is great potential to learn from them. However it is important to remember that this "record" was produced almost exclusively by non-Indian authors ... most of whom were motivated by very different economic, social and political agendas than the people and cultures they describe.

Our purpose in reviewing these documents was to search for ... additional insights regarding the ... project area's potential to contain archaeological sites, human burials, and areas with traditional cultural value.

2. Sacred Places Near Fort Snelling

a. Taku-Wakan-Tipi

The high ground located approximately one-half mile west of the proposed T.H. 55 corridor is clearly identified in nineteenth century writings as one of the areas near Fort Snelling that were considered sacred to the Dakota. According to Reverend Gideon H. Pond, a long-time missionary to the Eastern Dakota, this area was known as Taku-Wakan-Tipi, or the "Dwelling Place of the Gods"... Pond's reference to the hill as a burial place is believed to be a reference to the Protestant Cemetery located on Morgan's Mound that appears on a series of historic maps of the Fort Snelling area ... The summit of Morgan's Mound is presently located in the vicinity of 42nd and 46th Avenues where it appears to be bisected by County Road 62 and is otherwise occupied by private residences and portions of the VA hospital and the Naval Air Station.

None of the historic accounts reviewed as part of this study specifically identify the spring known as Coldwater as a place of traditional worship; however, it seems reasonable to assume, based on ... the proximity of Morgan's Mound to the Coldwater Spring, and the spiritual significance attached to natural springs, that some Dakota may have regarded the primary spring at Coldwater as a uniquely sacred location.

3. Observations Concerning Dakota Funeral Practices

a. Archaeological Observations

The cemeteries of the Eastern Dakota for the period prior to

European contact are believed to be represented by a large portion of the estimated 15,000 earthen mounds that once existed in Minnesota... In general, mounds tend to be situated on areas of greatest relief near water such as bluff tops that overlook major rivers, high river terraces overlooking lower floodplains, or on high ground along lakeshores.

b. Ethnohistoric Accounts

Numerous first-hand observations of Dakota funeral practices in Minnesota were recorded by non-Indian travelers and fur traders, military personnel and missionaries ... Perhaps the most common observation made ... are the descriptions these accounts provide of placing the deceased on elevated scaffolds or in trees for a period of time prior to in-ground burial ... Several nineteenth-century accounts emphasize the importance Dakota people placed on choosing a well elevated location for their funeral platforms. As mentioned above, this pattern is consistent with the location of documented mound cemeteries which are typically situated on prominent topographic features.

Viewed against the backdrop of this historic information, it seems unlikely that a wetland environment, situated at the base of an upland, and some distance from the bluff edge, would be selected as a preferred setting for planting trees intended to hold funeral platforms. In this context, the location of the Four Oaks identified as sacred funeral trees is inconsistent with what has been historically documented as traditional Dakota funeral practice.

When all was said and done, the courts did not grant the land including the Four Trees Area or the Coldwater Spring the status of "Traditional Cultural Property."

Reverend Gary Cavender

What if 35W had to change and the only direction it could change was to take out the Basilica, how much of a protest would be there? You would probably have armed conflict just to protect it.

You go out to where we are buried and you look around and you see God's creation there. This is a basilica as well. In some traditions they bury their saints in churches. So how much different is it that we bury our ancestors in our churches.

You wouldn't dare go to Mount Sinai and put up a pizza stand. I don't know, maybe you would, because after all, on your money you say, "In God We Trust," and so that must be the God you trust. Maybe your banks are the Basilicas.

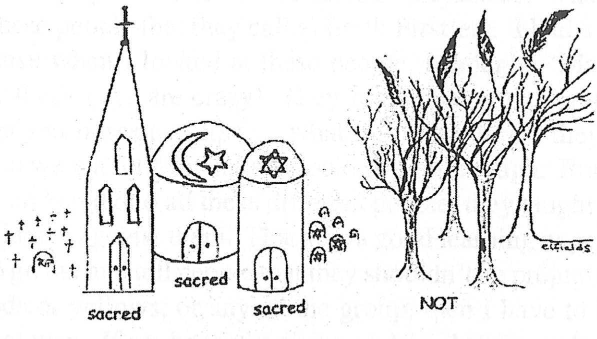
Diane Steen-Hinderlie

A note on Religion

I was thinking, it's such a coincidence, in the so-called Christian West, we still don't have everything scientific. We have these traditional sites, that we think are in Palestine. Roman emperor Constantine's mother went down there after he converted to Christianity, c. 300 A.D., and was looking for where Jesus might have been, and they said, "It's purported that Jesus was born here and the cross was there. It wasn't scientific at all. It was the traditional site of Jesus' birth, where the church of Nativity stands.

So we were thinking [about] the traditional stuff down there, [when] the highway department was poo-pooing the statements of the elders [who said], "This is our tradition, we don't have the science to back it up, but this is the belief of the people." There should have been more respect in our Christian community for that, because we have no proof [about Jesus]. It's all traditional!

Of all the things the Mendota considered sacred, I felt the water (spring) would have the most resonance with mostly Christian Minnesotans, because of baptism, etc. In August of 1998, I gave a list of Biblical water references to Bob Brown and Jim Anderson.



The World According to MNDot

CHAPTER TWELVE

Timeless Stories

Wally Ripplinger

Inyan wakan emaciyapi do. Chaske hechea taha yahe do. What I just told you in my language is that my name is Holy Stone, and I come from the town of Chaske. How I got involved with the Highway 55 people was we were down at Mankato at a Wacipi, a powwow, and Michael Scott came up to me and offered tobacco, told me about this place up here in the cities and asked for my help. I took his tobacco and said, "I will come down and see what it's all about." We met down there, Michael and I. We walked through the camp. He took me through the trees and told me the story of the Dakotas, how they were interned down by Fort Snelling, what had happened to the people and what those trees meant, being north, south, east and west. I walked around and talked to a lot of people.

So every day after work, I'd come down and visit with people, talk, I was able to tell some stories. The Dakota people said that they needed a place by the sweat lodge, the inipi lodge, to hold different ceremonies. So I said, "Well, I have a ceremonial tipi. I'll bring it down." So I brought that down and put that tipi up. There were so many good experiences for me, learning experiences for me, there. I don't think we have a long enough tape, but we'll just keep going.

One of the things that I personally learned, that I talk to people about when I do my presentations, was not to be prejudiced. What I learned was about these people that they called Earth First!ers. I had a prejudice in me, because when I looked at these people, I thought, 'Man, what a bunch of … these guys are crazy! They're not clean, they got all these ear-piercings and noses and lips … what in the world are they doing?!' Some of them were a little bit unkept, looking a little rough. But the more I came back and talked to all these different people, they taught me about my own prejudice against them. That was a good learning experience. If I'm going to go out and tell people that they shouldn't be prejudice against blacks or reds or yellows, or any ethnic group, then I have to learn that I can't be that way. If we honestly give people a chance, we're going to find out that they're really nice people.

One time I was asked to come to an inipi lodge. I went. We were getting ready, and here came this guy, and he was full of tattoos, every place. He had his ears, lips, tongue, eyebrows; he had more artillery than you could shake a stick at! I thought, "My God! This guy's going to come in to sweat? What can this person possibly have to offer?!" He turned out to be one of the nicest, politest, spiritual, loving people I have met in a long time. There we have to understand, people might look different than us, but they certainly do have something to offer.

How all those different communities came together to support that effort was a good thing. Never seen it before. You had Dakotas, Lakotas, Anishinabes, Blacks, Hispanics, yellow guys, little kids, everybody working together for the same cause. I never saw any arguing. It was really a true place of love and kindness. We need that, especially now, not only in this country but throughout the world. I personally believe if we're going to survive as human beings, the way the creator intended us to do, we need to learn to get along with each other.

If we could take those things that we had at camp, and apply it to the whole world, we wouldn't need all these goofy politicians, silly rules, we wouldn't have to worry about 'is this country going to bomb us?', or 'do we have to destroy this?', or 'what are we going to do with all this nuclear waste?' We wouldn't have to worry about all that. I'd go for that in a heartbeat.

Sister Jane McDonald

My name is Jane McDonald, and I'm in the community of the Sisters of St. Joseph here in Minneapolis. We're going to reminisce a bit here about what brought us together. The community that called us forth were the young people that were fighting for the rights of Mother Earth, the sacredness of the earth, and the indigenous people about the sacred sites out at Highway 55. When I learned of this tragic plan, I would call it "destruction project," that was coming out there, as citizens here we were concerned and called on to stand up for the earth and the indigenous people's sacred sites out there. There was not a doubt or question in my mind that I would want to go, need to go and must go and be in solidarity with each other out there, and see if there wasn't some way that our voice together could protect [that place].

I remember making a phone call to MNDoT. I remember they explained there was some curve in the road out there that seemed kind of dangerous, and I remember saying, "This just can't be." When I learned to drive my car, when you came to a curve in the road, you slowed down. It was a pretty basic truth that that's what you could do. I couldn't justify that [as being] why they needed to destroy that sacred place.

I had the honor to meet Carol Kratz, this beautiful elderly woman. We all know your life isn't the same after you meet Carol. I saw what she and her family were going through. She was standing up for her rights in the neighborhood, she wasn't giving in to the money or the bribing. I was deeply touched, and I felt strength, of course from Mother Earth, [but also] from the people who stood up for this and were counted. It birthed a deep spiritual dimension for me that I'm still affected by, actually, something that birthed such profound life. Yet the shadow side of that is that I had to witness the destruction of that sacred site, those trees, the fire, how we gathered around it …

I work with elderly people in nursing homes on the north side here in Minneapolis, and I had some very special Native American elder friends in my life. Of course Bee Swanson was one of those, and Larry Cloud Morgan, Richard Crawford, Joe Connolly, I want to mention the names in reverence of them. So I've always felt deeply attached in learning from the Native people, and I started to bring some of those elders out [to camp], and I would describe and explain what happened out there, and they always just got it, like that, in their heart, I could see it in their eyes. It was like coming home for them, John Blackhorse expressed that once. Richard Crawford died in that time, as did John Blackhorse, and I was honored to take their ashes to those sacred places. These were some really personal and professional times for me. These were sacred burial grounds, and they still are! So I thought this is definitely where [I should take their ashes]. I took John Blackhorse's remains out there to call on his spirit to help us save this place, these sacred waters.

That place birthed something in us that we will never forget, and we still grieve.

One of my vivid memories about the encampment and all that sacred space was the species arrogance that the two-leggeds have in this creation. I remember standing on that bridge where the creek came across, looking out at the encroachment of the machines as they kept coming, and I saw a turtle down in the water, of medium size. Here was this great primordial creature, and you could just sense that it knew of the fatal things that were happening, that were coming upon its space, its home. I was just moved to tears by how we don't get it.

Lynn Levine: Somebody told me that they bury themselves in the mud for the winter, and that mud was unearthed! Rabbits would run into their burrows, and then the bulldozers would come and knock them down.

Sister Jane: I remember witnessing the rabbits on the run, the turtle in the water … Carol Kratz mentioned that often about what that meant to her, to be living in intimacy and how those creatures gave her such a blessing. That dimension of that life out there was so dishonored and destructed. It was just one of the most wrenching and poignant moments out there [for me].

Our gratitude to the many people who are willing to take this time to document this story … It is crucial that part must never die; there was a community of people that stood up and resisted the evil of this. And it's not over! We're going to keep this kind of energy alive.

Darlene Jackson

Boojoo. Awanook indijinikaaz. I'm Ojibwe from Leech Lake. Currently, I'm an urban Indian. I just watched what happened at Camp Coldwater. As I was watching it, we need to keep on going forward with the truth to the public, and to anyone.

There's a reason why this all happened. I heard about it from Jay, who said, "Come on down and visit." I had no idea what was going on. When I finally got there, I saw a lot of people like one big family, willing to put their lives on the line for the Native people. It doesn't matter if you're white, black, red or yellow, we're all under God. Other people don't believe that. Even to this day, people look at us as being pagans, as being something evil. Now people are really looking at us, because they know, and feel, that something is going on. When I see white people, black people, yellow people come to Sundance or ceremonies, it reminds me of a story that was told to me about 15 years ago:

A long time ago, there were all these Indian spirits, and they had to find a home. There were a lot of spirits left, so they had to enter yellow bodies, black bodies and white bodies. I've had that uncanny sensation, whenever I meet someone, and I really get to know them. They may look white, but they're being drawn to the Indian way, because they have an Indian spirit inside them. We were told that we don't have a right to judge anybody but ourselves.

* * *

The first time I laid eyes on Kevin [Kittredge, the head of the State Patrol] was at the Four Trees. I went right over between him and the Minneapolis police, and I said, "You are my brother." I don't know if I prayed with him or not. Then we went to court, and he saw me. He said, "Do you have a ride home?" I said, "I suppose." He said, "I'll give you a ride home." I said, "That would be great." I said, "What? No State Patrol car?" We were just laughing. I was looking at him not as a State Patrol, but as a person. I knew he was very sensitive. These two Sate Troopers told me, "Kevin doesn't want to be in this position. He doesn't want to do this."

One day I saw Kevin, and I said, "Kevin, can you and me go pray together at the trees?" He said, "Yes we can." So they helped me down. He told that guy, "Hold her so she doesn't fall." We prayed together on two or three different occasions. He'd tell me about his family, his children. I know he has some pipestone; I have to remind him to bring that to Jimmy.

He asked me if I would do a sensitivity training for the trainees and rookies. I think Jimmy's going to come with, because I would like to have this videotaped. I have to bring sage, sweetgrass, cedar, and a stick of red willow. I want to be able to smudge all of them. I want to be able to give them a piece of sage to take with them. Also have a question and answer thing. The last thing I want to do is light the chanupa and smoke with them. I'm going to send the pipe around and say, "If you want to pray out loud or in your mind, that's your choice." We'll have water there. After we drink the water, we'll make a circle, and all shake hands. Then I'll share my story about my arrest. **(See p. 289)**

* * *

At the Mendota Powwow in 2001 I walked up to an older man who goes by Grandpa or Old Wolf. He had been sitting by the Sacred Fire for at least an hour. I put a log on the fire and he said, "I was wondering who was going to do that."

He stayed down at camp on and off for a number of months, so I asked him if he had a couple of stories I could record. He said, "Oh, I ain't got time for that. I'll just tell you this and you just put more words in." I

said OK. After he was finished, I said, "I better go write this down before I forget." He said, "Don't worry about it, what I just told you will stick in your head." And it did.

Grandpa

I remember how the animals used to come around, how the fox would come right up there and eat bread, and the crows would eat bread, and so the crows would attack the fox. The deer would run around in the woods, and the raccoons would come around... all the animals felt safe there, and they would gather. They weren't safe in the State Park because of the dogs, so they would come up to the camp area instead.

The crows even got to know you. I came out of the veteran's building one time and this crow saw me and went and landed right on my van! He thought I was gonna give him bread. The animals always had plenty of food out there, bread, fish, all sorts of food.

Another thing I think of is all the people that came to pray in those trees. We had rabbis, priests, Buddhists ... all kinds of people came there to pray.

I remember that big mulch pile, how if you dug a few inches down, you couldn't even hold your hand there, it was so hot!

Those are the things that stick out in my mind.

Joe Hesla

Another thing that I remember is going to the rallies at the government center, around the pond. One of those rallies I was there fairly early and some people were gathered, about 12 of us maybe. We were standing there at the top of the escalator and the security guard came by as we were talking amongst ourselves and he said we had to move back because we were right in the main walkway. A couple of the folks with us were snide with the security guard; snide, maybe sarcastic. And we did comply with the order, but I remember thinking that it was not a good way to operate, in terms of the movement and capturing what we want.

I didn't say anything at the time but later I talked to Solstice, I think it was. And said what I thought and wanted to hear what he thought. I just mentioned to him that I thought cops and security guards are just there to do a job and that it just doesn't accomplish anything to be petty with them. It doesn't really get you anywhere and there was really nothing to be gained by that. And I mentioned it to Solstice and he understood what I had to say, but he also mentioned that, you kind of have to remember that a lot of these people have been beat up a number of times and have been treated really poorly by police and people of authority, and their actions - you could say they're understandable from their history.

Thunder

I grew up down by 54th and the river, within a block of where the original Camp Two Pines was at. I have a lot of memories of that area as a child, growing up with my two sisters. We spent a lot of time down in the park there, and by the river. We got to know all the trails down there. That was like our park; instead of going to a park where there's a jungle gym and swings, we went down to the river and climbed trees and built rope swings. There were different places to go. We'd go to the Cold Spring, climb the fence and go swim in their pond. They used to stock it with trout, because the water was so cold, trout could live there. Usually security would come, catch us and kick us out. We used to build bike jumps on the trails. We'd explore the bluffs.

I remember my dad used to take me and my sisters down there. My earliest memory was with my mom and dad. They were having us climb this big hill, cause it's all bluff down there. I remember getting about halfway up and feeling like I just couldn't make it anymore. I latched onto this little tree, just screaming and crying; I just couldn't make it. My dad had to come back down to get me. I can still picture that.

We used to swim in the river, brave the river and go out a ways. We'd hear stories of people drowning because the undercurrent was so strong, and I don't know why, but that didn't stop us. Now the river's so polluted you don't even want to swim in it anymore. That was 39 years ago that I lived down there. I always enjoyed it down there, and I know I'll continue to return.

As I got older, I moved away for a while, but as soon as I got out of the military I moved back there, and that was one of the reasons why, because I wanted to be close to the river. Because when I lived far away, I would keep going back, and I had to travel to get there, so I thought, 'I'm gonna move back there, so I can be by the river!' So I rented a house down there.

When the camp came about in 1998, and I met some of the people there, they were really glad I came along, because they found somebody that knew their way around. I got to show them some places that I knew about, like where there used to be houses along the river bluff ... just little bits of foundations ... it made me feel kind of good that I was doing something worthwhile, to be able to show those people.

A strong spirit area

One of the things that I found out even as a young kid was that it's a real strong spirit area. I know that there were many Dakota people massacred down there when Fort Snelling came about. During the Dakota conflict, which took place in the Willmar area, the warriors left their people down by Fort Snelling and came out here to join the fighting. One of the things that happened down there by the river was the soldiers would try to question the remaining women and children as to where their sons and fathers were, and if they felt that they were being misled, they would just shoot them on the spot.

There were many places down there where Indian people were killed randomly. When white people died, they always had ceremony for them, and when our people died, we conducted ceremony also, but many times when these people were killed randomly, there was never a ceremony conducted for these people, their bodies were just left, and their spirit would remain down in that area. I came to learn after many years that some of these encounters with some of the spirits that I had down there were people that were left behind, and their spirit was never properly sent on its way.

There were several times when I talked to my elders about things that I encountered down there. At first it was kind of scary, unknowing ... I was taught and told how to go about conducting some sort of a ceremony for these people, helping them to get on their way, because their spirits were lost, they never found their way home. I think that's still true today. As the Indian people started to come back down there in '98, to find their way around, I think they were encountering a lot of these spirits in that area. I think they learned the same thing, that ceremony needed to be conducted in that area, to send these people on their way.

As a young man growing up, I had many encounters with different types of spirits. I seen all kinds of things that people, if I told them, would think I was nuts, but I was able to take other people down there, to some of these places, and they saw the same things, so I was able to kind of verify it to myself, that I wasn't just seeing these things, that they were really truly there.

* * *

When the Mendota Dakota people came down there, I was glad that they found their way back down there, because that was their ancestry. They belong there. There's still a lot of things going on there with learning and finding out about the past. Fortunately the Mendota Dakota people have found their way home back to Mendota, and I know that they continue to find their way back to the other side of the river where I came from.

Other places like the Cold Spring, which has always been a strong spirit area, and those Four Oaks, I remember as a kid, they were out in the middle of a field, tall grass. Not a lot of humans went out there, but I remember deer trails and stuff we used to walk along down there, and coming across them trees, and for some reason just finding a peace over there among those trees. I'd always find myself going back there quite often, because for some reason there was an inner peace inside there, and I always felt like returning there. Unfortunately they cut those trees down, but I honestly believe in my heart that in finding those trees, the Mendota Dakota and other people that came and rediscovered that area, that was meant for us to find that area, for people to come back down there, and for those ceremonies to be conducted again, for those people that had been killed in that area. I think we took care of what we were supposed to take care of.

The Four Trees were taken, but I think that was meant to be too, because that was a closing or an end of some of the things that have happened in the past. Up here on my wall, I took a picture of the Four Oaks and put it in a birch bark frame, and mysteriously it faded, you can hardly see it now. The other pictures hanging there haven't faded, but that one, it's kind of like a ghost.

Now I'm out here in Willmar, and I still continue to go back down there. It's been a while, but always in my heart I have a longing and I always have the urge to go back down to the river. I know I'm never gonna go back down there and live, because a lot was lost for me, when they put in that road, they took out a lot of old stomping ground, for me ... I just saw so many things take place when they were building that road, injustice to the land and to the people that were trying to live down there, that I just don't want to go live down there anymore. It took something away from me, what they did to that place.

One thing I can say about the road is that it never served the purpose they said it would. I've driven that road and it doesn't save any time, in fact I've heard people say it takes longer during rush hour ...

One of the things that really hurt for me was when they cut off the water supply to the falls, so there wasn't a falls all of a sudden. That really hurt inside for me. I thought that was something they really shouldn't have messed with. Maybe they could've found another way. It doesn't even really flow in the same place anymore.

I still like to go down further away from where they built the road, down into the park ... It'll always be there for me, I don't care how far away I live, I'll always go back down there.

Marlin Marking

My name is Marlin. My mother told me I was white and going to college. My grandmother told me the truth, that I was part Indian. She loved Indians. Right now I go to Dakota class to do what I can to learn. When I was younger I lived on my grandfather's farm, and my ancestors lived down here. I'm between both those right now, learning the Dakota language, and trying to continue what my great-grandfather did (homesteaded). All the different temporary structures that people put up [at the encampment] confirmed my belief that people can still do it the way my great-great-grandfather did it 150 years ago.

I didn't know about the Four Oaks or the Coldwater Springs at first. We went for a sweat lodge by Lake Minnetonka and it didn't happen, so we sat and waited. I was with Stanton and he said "We have a sweat every night at camp; just come on over there." I said "Camp?" and he said, "The encampment to stop the reroute of highway 55." I said "Oh, you've got an encampment?" and he told me about Earth First! and the Native American community that followed some traditions. So I went there to sweat. The next day I moved all my things and set up my tent there, actually moved there. I was living in Northeast in a friend's Volkswagon pop-up camper, so I was camping already when I came there. That was in the end of September, 1998.

It was really interesting to see abandoned houses. They were in such beautiful shape! I would have bought them for a dollar and moved them if I had the resources. It was really sad to see Carol Kratz have a deadline of December 9th to get out.

I'm a veteran. At the beginning of this I wondered about my own involvement in the military and, as a citizen, what are my responsibilities, what are my rights to question authority?

I put in a change of address to 5307 Riverview Road, and we started getting mail there. I got my license there, I registered my car there. That was my home. I knew a home because of this sharing that the Native community did. I meet people from camp today, and there's this empty feeling in my heart like there's something missing in my life.

At camp I was really interested in finding out the history. I'd look for elders that knew. I was giving tours at the Free State, talking about the history. What we do in this lifetime matters, that's one thing that came home to me at camp.

In my mind [the reroute] violated three things about the people. Minnehaha Park was the first State Park in the United States, 1878. It violated a Native American sacred site. They were burial grounds, my great-great-grandfather's testimony called it Morgan's Mound. The Indian's told him, and they had no reason to lie. So he knew, and he wrote that in his treatise that he did for the historical society in the 1860s, so we used that in our court case, but it didn't help I guess. Another reason was that Clinton passed a law that we have to keep our green space, that no federal land will be given for roads built in parks. They got around that by saying that the planning was going on before the law was passed.

Then I heard that people used [that area] for a meeting place. They didn't have wars there. The tribal councils would choose to meet there and have dinner. They were enemies, but they would try to work something out. This family, that their baby was killed, the family of the killers would donate so many blankets or horses to make up for it, thereby stopping this escalation of war.

There was a fox there, and deer. They're all gone now. There's one fox that still lives in a culvert by the spring, but there was a red fox, and a gray fox. I would throw bread out. One day this fox came out, and he was ripping off pieces of bread. There were like 50 crows around, and he was really being bothered by them. Neither the fox nor the crows paid attention to us, the humans, who were like 50 feet away.

One time they were getting ready for a sweat lodge, so they were singing some songs. This deer came down out of the woods by Coldwater, and came up in these bushes over by the sweat lodge and the Four Trees, about 50 feet away, and laid down there. I was sitting up on that hill watching her. It was funny how it looked like she was drawn to that drum song.

There was one spot on the cliff that I had, that I never told too many people about. I went down there with Carla one day and we lit a pipe. Right as we lit it an eagle came and flew right adjacent to us, still 100 feet above the river.

Everyone still had their personal lives. Camp was kind of above and beyond that. We still had to eat … some people even sacrificed that, people in trees … that really brought home to me how big this was, and that it was on CNN once bothered me. It should have been on every day. There were some powerful forces trying to persuade the media.

I heard that they tried to build a nuclear power plant there in 1959. The City Council voted that down, so [it was known that] the people didn't want industrialization coming up in that area. The same thing happened with the road; the City Council voted it down in the 60s. So MNDoT sat back and steamed for a while, and then just rammed the road down people's throats, in a beautiful place where there's five waterfalls. I can imagine years ago before the terrain changed there was a bog. This is considered the breath of the creator spirit; that place, Pike's Island, as a trading place, has been going on for 10,000 years I'm sure, by what ever tribes were here. It has a connection to the Missouri River system, the Ohio River system, going north to the Great Lakes. These rivers were the highways back then.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

The Trees

When people pass into the spirit world, our people put their bodies in trees, come back a year later, and whatever's left they bury it there. They buried them in what they call Taku Wakan Tipi, The Gathering Place, or where the spirits dwell. That's right where the vet's hospital is, and we were right there on the edge of it.

When Harry Charger came, he had a ceremony at the Four Trees. He told us that these were marker trees. [He also said] that maybe not these specific trees, but the trees in that area, had been used as death scaffolds for a long time. Those Four Trees had spirits in them that were stuck there, so he had a ceremony to release them. He took us and put us at different trees to represent what was the spirit of those trees.

-Jim Anderson

The following is testimony, excerpted from the Traditional Cultural Property assessment performed by MNDoT.

I first became aware of the Four Sacred Trees in question, when I was searching for a sacred place called Taku Wakan Tipi, that was known to exist near the present VA Hospital. I had known about these trees for some time, since they stand out like a beacon in this quiet, peaceful remnant of oak savannah. As I approached the trees on that day in 1996, I could tell that there was something very special about them. I made a tobacco offering and stepped into the middle of these trees. I could sense a powerful spiritual connection, and I told my partner, who was with me, there has been a ceremony done here before, a long time ago.

-Jeffery Grundtner; resident of the East Nokomis neighborhood.

I have touched the Four Sacred Trees and they have touched me.
-Zac Mitteness, Ojibway

... I have observed the four old oak trees aligned in a diamond shape in the path of the reroute. I feel an aura of specialness that represents the spiritual essence of our people. This indicates that there are people buried in that area. My cousin, Chris Leith, is a spiritual elder who has determined that people are buried near the Four Trees.

-La Rockzana Hop, Santee Sioux

There are also a diamond-shaped alignment of four large and very old oak trees right in the path of the proposed reroute. These trees are sacred to our people. They were used as burial scaffolds by the Dakota people, and also for the sacred ceremony called a vision quest.

-Jim Anderson, Mendota Mdewakanton Dakota

Among other reasons, the Four Oak Trees are sacred because of their age. We Indians treat our elders with the greatest of respect because of their wisdom. Similarly, the oak trees are our wise elders. They are our kin. **-Reverend Gary Cavender; Mdewakanton Dakota**

As concerns the Four Sacred Trees, there were medicine lodges near the trees many years ago. They have changed the color of the earth, so in the future all mankind will notice the changes on the earth. The Four Trees were burial sites.

-Cliford Duran, Chippewa and Cree

There are four sacred trees near Deer River, Minnesota which are historically preserved and protected by a fence. Like these trees, the Four Trees in the oak savannah which are in a diamond pattern are sacred to the Mendota Mdewakanton Dakota Community. They, too, should be preserved. Historically the trees supported burial platforms, or scaffolds, which held the dead. If many years ago the trees were insufficient in size to hold the platforms, the Indians would then bring in dead trees and underbrush to support the scaffolds ....

When I visited the Four Sacred Trees, I noted that they are located in a hollow part of the oak savannah. No other trees in the vicinity are exactly like them. In historic times there was an altar for prayer, meditation and "vision questing" in the center of the trees. The trees were uncommonly close together, indicating that their spacing was deliberate. These trees are our relatives — food should be put out for them and they should be cared for, not destroyed.

-Larry Cloud Morgan, Ojibway

Four very old oak trees planted in a diamond pattern (the four directions) have been identified. The trees mark the graves of Indians and are, therefore, sacred. The oak trees are simply large plants and, like plants, have medicinal and spiritual powers. Because there were Indians who lived historically in this area, there had to be burial grounds- all along the Minnesota river. The Indians placed bodily remains on scaffolds in the crutches of the trees- I can see in the branches of the Four Oaks where the bodies of men, women and babies were.

-Chris Leith, Mdewakanton Dakota

* * *

Greg Strandmark

On top of that, we talk about that we planted those trees for burial markers. When they cut them down they figured they were about 137 years old, which, if you go back was, [1862], that time when they were all sitting down at Pike's Island at the encampment, prison camp, pretty much. They were allowed to go hunting, but were pretty much watched heavily.

That first winter, there were so many people that died in that camp. Some of them got buried outside the encampment to start with. The white citizens dug them up and mutilated all the bodies. From then on they started burying them in the ground floor in their tipis. So technically they're still down there. But some got permission to bury them up on the hill. Sam or Gideon Pond, one of the early references of the area, recalls there were some Dakotas burying people up on Morgan's Mound as late as 1866. So if they were burying them up there that late, and those trees were put up there as markers about that same time, I guarantee you that's what those trees were there for. The State may not believe it, but I know in my heart that's what it was. It all fits.

Freedom

As I was interviewing one day, this man said to me, "I'm sorry, I don't mean to offend, but those Four Trees just were not sacred." I said, "uh, huh," and let him continue talking. My thoughts drifted around this comment so that I had to catch up and ask him what he said.

While I was not listening, I thought about it. First off, I do believe that the trees were sacred, for I respect the oral tradition of the indigenous people of this land. Also, proof aside, it seems a bit too coincidental that those trees, growing in the four directions, which most indigenous beliefs center around, were the same age, which corresponded to the general time of starvation and massacre amongst the indigenous people of the area. Whether the ceremony was common or only done once, I'm convinced there's meaning there.

My thoughts wandered a bit more, and I thought this: History aside, why did so many people come to that place? Why did so many people care? The draw that pulled people there was so irresistible, undeniable, and widespread throughout the people. There's something sacred about that, no? Furthermore, all the incredible things that happened there, all the growth of people; people learning ceremony, living together, kindness, family, truth ... all these things were happening because all those people came to those Four Trees, to protect them. All this time we thought that we were saving those trees, and really, those trees were saving us.

The following is a partial reprinting from the Traditional Cultural Property assessment performed by MNDoT.

Report on the Aging of Bur Oaks Near Minnehaha Falls, Minneapolis, MN

A report prepared by Gary R. Johnson
Associate Professor, Urban and Community Forestry
University of Minnesota

I. Introduction.

On October 2, 1998, I was contacted by Paul Walvatne, forester for MNDoT. Mr. Walvatne asked for my assistance in a procedure to determine the age of some selected bur oaks *(Quercus mac-*

roccirpa) in the vicinity of Minnehaha Falls Park, Minneapolis, MN. This request was obviously related to the controversial Hiawatha Ave. expansion in that area, so I agreed to participate in the procedure with the stipulation that I was not to be informed of the particular point of this controversy by any of the parties involved. This was done to ensure that I remained an unbiased, technical expert.

II. The Procedure.

On October 8, 1998 I met with Dan Gullickson (forester with MNDoT), Larry Westerberg (forester with the MNDNR), and Jim Nelson (MN Tree Care Advisor) at the Longfellow House parking lot near Minnehaha Falls Park. We then located three individual bur oaks located within one mile of the meeting area, and proceeded with the measurements, increment boring and aging of the trees.

Each bur oak was measured for its d.b.h. according to established forestry standards. Calibrated diameter tapes were used to measure the diameter of the tree stems. Measurements were taken at a height of 4.5 feet above ground. Increments were taken with a stainless steel, 16-inch long increment borer. I observed as Larry Westerberg sighted an entry point at the center of each stem, and proceeded to penetrate the stem with the length of the borer. Upon removal of the increment core from the stem, the core and coring instrument was immediately handed to me. At that time, I inspected it for assurance that it had reached the center of the tree in a straight line, that no sections had broken off and that it was clear to read. The core was then placed in an oversized manila folder and marked with its appropriate field sampling code.

Before we proceeded to the next tree, I immediately counted the annual growth rings, indicated by rings of large diameter, spring vessels in the wood, with a l0x or 20x magnifying lens for clarity and detail. This information was then recorded in the field notebook, and the cores were taped to the folder and labeled with the appropriate field sampling code. At no time did the folder with the increment cores leave my possession.

Following the field sampling, I allowed the increment cores to air-dry in my office at the University. On October 9, 1998, I counted the rings two additional times and recorded the data in the field notebook.

IV. The Interpretation.

Increment cores were taken at the d.b.h. height. Therefore, the young tree needed to reach a height of 4.5 feet before annual rings could be visible at this point. I have approximated the length of time for a seedling to reach this height at five years. Therefore, five years should be added to each calculated age for accuracy.

Bur oaks characteristically have very thick outer bark, commonly ranging from 1-4 inches thick. Therefore, to accurately estimate the true diameter of the wood (and the area where annual growth rings are formed), the thickness of the bark on both ends of the diameter measurement point should be subtracted for accurate measurement of the actual wood.

MF 101: Using the upper end of the counted annual ring range, 125, and adding five years for seedling growth, I calculate the age to be 130 years.

MF 102: Using the count of annual rings that was performed after twenty-four hours of drying as the base, and adding five years for seedling growth, I calculate the age to be between 125-127 years.

MF 103: Since it was estimated that the increment-coring tool did not capture the last one inch of wood needed to reach the center of the tree, an estimate of the number of annual rings present in one inch of early growth needed to be calculated. I measured one inch from the proximal (closest to the tree's center) end of the increment core and counted seven annual rings in that inch. Therefore, I have added an additional seven years of age to the increment core annual ring total and the seedling growth age. I have calculated the age of this tree to be 122+7+5 =134 years.

Age of bur oaks does not necessarily increase in a linear fashion with stem diameter increase for two primary reasons: 1) Thickness of the outer bark varies considerably, as explained earlier. And, 2) Growing conditions vary and influence growth rate, even within a stand. Any variations in soil type, soil moisture content, and competition for sunlight will affect growth rate and hence, distance between rings. Therefore, it is not unusual to find trees with smaller d.b.h. that are actually older than larger d.b.h trees in the same area.

The following is a reprinting of a letter written shortly after the final raid regarding the age of the Four Trees:

Dear Mr. Pafko,

On 12-15-99 I aged a cross section of an oak removed from the Hiawatha Avenue construction site. The sample was stored at the Highway Patrol Station in Oakdale, MN, and the inspection took place at this same site.

I counted the annual rings three times, using a 10x hand lens and needlepointer. There were 132 rings. Since this section had presumably been taken at a point approximately 4.5 feet above ground I added 5 years as an approxomation of the time required for a seedling to reach 4.5 feet in height.

Therefore, it is my opinion that the tree examined was 137 years old at the time of removal.

Respectfully yours,

Gary R. Johnson, Associate Professor,
Department of Forest Resources
University of Minnesota

THEORY OF MOTIVATION #4

Marshall Lough

As far as getting in to why they did this [reroute], to me it's so much like an onion, you just go through the layers. There is the obvious general capitalist, distribution, metro, sprawl, growth, metropolis monster that's out there. There have been theories that Minneapolis is going to make a bid for the Olympics at some point, or the fact that [then-mayor] Sharon Sayles Belton's brother was really involved in the construction, or so many other modern capitalist theories, that are accurate, if you take them on a very outer level.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Sprouting New Leaves

Stories From Spring, 1999

Debbra

In April the women would gather during the day to do security. In that circle one day, I was sitting facing south, and we had something we called Mailbox Road [that ran along the west side of camp]. To my right, I kept hearing, I thought, a van, that had powwow singing, drumming, singers. I mentioned it to the women in the circle, I kept saying, "Where's the van?" They said, "What van?" It was the grandfathers singing. The spirits were there, and I could hear them and they could not, and I will never forget that experience. It was absolutely sacred, and a confirmation that I was in the right place.

In the spring, Sky and I came up with an incredible idea. He started flying kites for fun. My training in the 70s was: kites can wreak havoc on helicopters and airplanes. We were in the direct path of the airport. We spent a lot of money on kites, and we had a lot of string on those kites. There was one point where we had four kites up. We never had airplanes run us, for months! It was a time of great joy and celebration. The planes didn't circle, the black helicopters didn't swoop. Finally though, one evening about four o'clock, a plane came in. It was an odd-looking plane. It banked sideways, and its wings clipped two of the strings, and the kites flew away. So we did know at that time, that they were aware, and that we were keeping them out of the airspace. It was quite delightful to cause a little resistance to their movement of hostility with their cameras.

* * *

I remember Nokomis Tree Guy. When I first met this man, our kitchen was by the Star Lodge. The food area was behind it, on a floor made of pallets. We had a camp rule, no loose dogs. We preferred no dogs, but absolutely no loose dogs, and specifically no loose dogs in the kitchen. I was in the kitchen, and he had this big ugly-ass mutt of a dog that came in there, and jumped up on the counter and started licking the food. I started swatting and yelling, "Get this animal out of here." Tree Guy came in the kitchen, very aggressive, cornered me and started butting his chest at me. I was able to get away from him. He had his dog leash around his neck, and he told me, "I'm a Vietnam Vet. I'm a crazy man." It was the first time I yelled at the site. I was asking for backup. Bear came over. For the first time in my life, I actually wanted to wail on somebody, and I was looking for a two by four. We ended up in the kitchen where the fire was. He came in after me. I was on the other side and Bear was by the door. I said, "Bear, you better keep him the fuck away from me." Bear told Tree Guy he had to leave and started pushing him out. He left.

At some point in May, Tree Guy's son came down and started swooping through the camp. He was a young punk, about 18. He cut through the trees in his SUV. Sky went out and stood in front of his SUV, and Tree Guy's son started clutch-popping it. It bumped Sky, who fell backwards half a foot. Sky then reaches down on his thigh and pulls out his bowie knife and stabs the tire. We had a delight with that.

* * *

We had a gentleman at the site named Scott. He lived in the back of his truck. He was basically a street person, in his late forties. He had this incredibly old, wretched, loving dog called Thor. Thor was blind, and had this incredible distorted spine and limp. It was painful to watch. He wrenched at your heart with compassion. Thor would never have hurt anybody.

Scott would always take his truck and dog down by the springs, to be on alert, and watch and feel for anything. One evening, the cops were banging on the door, and Thor was tied up outside and was doing his, "Wraw, wraw, wraw!" Scott hollered out, "Hey, who's there?" Nobody answered, and he said he kind of took his time, pulled on his pants. Before he got out, his dog had been shot I believe two times in the back. No one could believe it. The dog did live, I'm happy to say, which is an absolute miracle unto itself. It proves that there are spirits there. There was a lot of compassion that came out of that, from people in the community realizing that there was a lot of brutality and harassment that went on, and that we weren't lying and telling stories.

* * *

I had some issues with disrespect. At some point, there was a group of people that felt it was their mission to bury and remove the meat from the site. They did not eat meat, so no one else could eat meat. Now in our culture, there's meat-eating. It's a part of our DNA and blood type. I had real issues with that; someone else trying to impose their ideals on another culture. I had issues with some of the disrespect around the Sacred Fire. I had issues with women who would be on their moon and go to the Sacred Fire, and with people who would cook food, and sleep and eat around the Sacred Fire. I felt that there needed to be more of a First Nations presence there than there was.

Strength in Diversity

There were a lot of issues because of the diversity. I don't feel that it was a negative thing. I do know that it was the second longest occupation in the histoy of the United States, the first being Alcatraz. I know that we had the whole world watching. I know that they knew that it was a very unusual situation, and that they were terrified.

The diversity of the people strengthened the situation by the fact that it proved to this country politically that a group of people from many different cultures, backgrounds, religious convictions, economic classes, could come together for the specific purpose of saving a sacred site; that when something is really wrong, it needs to be stopped. I was very proud to be a part of that.

I think it scared the hell out of this country, because it had never happened before. In the 60s it was the hippies and the subversive college kids, who are always looking for change. It was enlightening for this country to know that the power of the people could not be stopped. We did save the springs.

Heidi Olson

My name is Heidi Olsen. My grandma used to live about four or five blocks from Minnehaha Park, and I used to go there as a child. It always felt like a special place. I saw transitions occur down there as I grew up. I remember drum circles in the park, a lot of culture and diversity, a peaceful place where people went to enjoy nature and life.

I was very disturbed to hear of the reroute. I was a very busy person during the time it all started, Camp Two Pines ... I heard about it through a couple close friends I had who went down there often. I saw the pain they had when the houses were destroyed. The new camp came up, and my friends kept telling me to go down there. I wanted to help defend this place that I considered to be very special; I didn't know just how special it was until I went down there. That would've been May of 1999. I drove into camp, and it took just a couple seconds for me to feel like I had driven into my home. I was greeted kind of skeptically; I was dressed kind of nice, groomed, and people thought, 'What is this lady with these kids doing here?' I thought it was important for my kids to see, I want my children to know truth, and they went with me a lot there.

One of the fondest memories I have was of the very first day I came to camp ... there was a young woman sitting in a mosquito net, rolling a cigarette. She called herself Freedom and she introduced herself to me right away, and talked to me a little bit about what was important to her and why she was there. I talked to her a little bit about my past, living on the road for nine years. I missed that life, and I immediately felt at home at camp, where people had common interests, values, and ways of living. It gave me a sense of peace and belonging that I hadn't felt in a really long time.

After spending some time at camp I found out that someone that I'd known since I was a child, Thunder, was there too. He'd been camping since day one. It was real nice to see him. He spent time taking me down to the river, and showing me a lot of different places down there that truly had a lot of spirit life, a lot of energy and a lot of love. He brought me one time to an old powwow circle, and you could still see where the people would dance. You could feel the power there. He showed me a lot of places that he played when he was a kid growing up in that area.

We ended up hooking up and having a child that was conceived on that sacred land. We always feel that he is a very great blessing. We gave him the name Freedom Wind, for a number of reasons; we feel his name is powerful and gives us hope for tomorrow. Our children are our hope for tomorrow! We hope to raise him in a loving way, remembering the sacredness and the family we had down there in that camp. He will always be a part of that energy. You can not give that away. You can cut down the trees, you can put a road in, but you cannot take away the spirit life, the energy, the love. We also named him after that young woman who I saw when I was down there, whom I think very highly of today.

The community itself was very special, in that these people could live together in harmony, and solve problems through communication and patience. That is something I will always remember. How people pulled together with loving hearts, in a time of deep hatred and violence, in my opinion, from the other people, specifically MNDoT, Jessie Ventura.

I remember a lot of people fondly, how much they cared about my children, [Eli and Oriana], took time showing them around, teaching them skills they will be able to use forever. My kids bring camp up from time to time, maybe not specifics, but I think they'll remember the love and community they saw there.

For me, living on the road for nine years and then coming back into society has been a difficult struggle. I feel like I'm someone I'm really not. I really needed camp, being outside, and in a tent, and in the kitchen where the people prepared food and prayed together, and gave each other life force, nourished each other in all ways.

It saddens me to go back there today, because you can feel death. It bothers me. I know the elders said that the healing has occurred and it is OK now, but you can still feel the pain, and their death is very evident, and I still cry when I go down there now.

I'm very thankful for the people who fought and continue to fight for Camp Coldwater, because that is a special place too, and the spirits can be felt there. I hope this book that is being written will help people in the future not to be ignorant about these places, and to understand how important it is to keep them here for the betterment of the whole universe. If human beings continue to destroy at the rate we are, we will become extinct, and we could harm the earth goddess as well ... I hope the prayers we had, the pureness we gave from our hearts will be remembered in a good way.

Eli

My name is Eli, and I liked to play at camp. There was this place there, where the tractors were, the big machines, where they had driven there were big holes, and they got filled up with water, and we would play in them. We got really messy. I liked the people but I can't remember their names.

Oh yeah! My favorite of the Four Trees were the black, the yellow and the white one.

On the fourth of July we watched fireworks. I got to do security, and my name was Big Brain.

I made a sign that said, "No." My mom asked me why I made it, and I said, "Because when MNDoT comes, I'm going to put it in front of them and stop the reroute."

In the forest on the trail I climbed a couple trees.

Oriana

My name is Oriana, and I liked playing in the mud. When we got dirty, my mom said we had to wear some of our dad's clothes, and then we had to wear long shirts. We went in daddy's tipi. He had a bed, with sheets.

The kitchen was really small, and there was a lot of food.

I went with my mom over to the Sacred Fire, and I offered tobacco. I felt happy about that. The red tree was my favorite tree. I can't remember anything else.

Kevin

My name's Kevin. I am as of right now 23. During the time of the Free State I was 19 and 20. I heard about Big Woods Earth First! months before anything happened with the Free State. I was living in Wyoming at the time. By mid-September I was there, and I never really left. Once I got there I was there. It was obviously pretty amazing and all this ...

Not too long ago, Keith and I were sitting around by the river, first time we had seen each other in about two years, after we had all gone our own ways for awhile. Just talking, stories and stuff. He reminded me of this time that just made me laugh, and still makes me laugh right now.

It was just he and I on security at night. It was early spring, and it was rainy. This is probably March or early April of '99. We were the only ones on security and it was rainy and cold, and we were pissed off.

We went into our kitchen which was a circular object with a roof on it, except for in the middle, and brought three pallets in and got 'em all going in this huge inferno. There were flames coming 15 feet off the top of the roof. We were just sittin' around laughin'. It dried everything out; everything in the whole kitchen was dry immediately. We were just sittin' there like, "OK, hopefully everything doesn't go up." In maybe 20 minutes it's already going down, pallets don't burn that long ... So Sky came in, he came running in half asleep, half of his clothes on, half off cause he was sleeping. He came running said, "God I thought something was on fire, burning up ..." Me and Keith just looked at him and laughed. We were just cold. That was a funny time, one of the funnier ones ...

Another funny time is at the [second encampment]. Me and Tree were on security, and somebody else was too. We were walking around, just doing a little patrol, whatever and in the rotunda, behind where the houses used to be, there were probably 15 people in these capes and hoods, standing in a circle, chanting some weird things, with candles.

So we got freaked out, "Oh god, it's the fuckin' clan ..." but then we noticed there were a couple Black dudes standin' around, so we're like, "OK, this isn't clan, what the fuck is goin' on?!" We were kind of stealthily walking up, trying to not be seen, cause we didn't know what they would do to us, but we got seen, and this guy just started walking back at us, this big football-esque looking guy ... but it was a Black guy, so we were OK with that, cause at least it wasn't a clan thing ... It turned out it was some fraternity, doing an initiation. They were like, "We can't tell you what's going on here, but everything's fine, we're not going to bother anybody, we know what's going on over there ..." We were like, "Whoa!" We really thought something weird was going on.

There were so many amazing things that happened, you can't remember them all. It's been a couple years now, which is crazy; so much has happened and everyone has grown so much. Even more amazing to me, is that even though there's a highway there right now, we are totally one. All these kids that were in high school at the time are either dropped out or not going to college and doing amazing things with their lives, and I think that's totally more of a victory than anything. I mean, stopping the highway woulda been great but that's only a small part. We just added to the revolution more than a lot of things, and that's really rad.

Freedom

I almost died putting up a net one night. It was springtime. It was raining. A group of us had been working in trees in the late night hours, as was protocol. I was new, the youngest in the group, just learned everything. I wanted to go work in the rain. Most of the group said hell no, but one woman came with me to spot.

This tree was a free-climb. I was barefoot, as it is much easier to climb that way when possible. About 40 feet up, the last crotch before the net, you had to free fall your body length across open space to the other trunk. Challenging, but within my capabilities, and I had done it a few times previous. I got up there, positioned myself, gauged, and at the exact second I leaned over, my foot slipped on the wet bark. My hand barely caught a piece of bark, also wet, on the other side, and I caught myself and pulled myself up. I almost fell and died. Then I hauled up the rope and went to work.

I think back on this, and it wasn't stupid, and it wasn't teenage invincibility. I knew what I was doing and my limits. I happened to fall, just as I happened to be able to catch myself. It was real, dealing with challenges as they come, instead of living sanctioned by worries, more of which I do now. I was more present then than I am now. But maybe that's how it goes; those things were needed then, and so they were done, and maybe someday they will be again.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN
The Land

The land of this story is, as all land is, part of a larger context. It lies in the bioregion that runs diagonally across Minnesota, the meeting place of woodland and prairie. For the land in this story, this means a unique ecosystem which is known as oak savannah, where burr oak trees grow in varying levels of density, with an understory of grasses and prairie plants. The uniqueness of the flora, along with proximity to the rivers and their protected wilderness areas, attracts unique fauna in turn.

Humans value the uniqueness of this land as well. The Mendota Dakota people regard the meeting of the Minnesota and Mississippi rivers as the center of their universe. The entire area surrounding the meeting of these rivers was recognized by many tribes as a gathering place and trade center. It was also valued as a neutral place, where otherwise warring tribes would send representatives to maintain or improve intertribal relations. This land was chosen by the first European settlers as being strategic for trade, military defense, and dominance of the indigenous people and culture.

The following pages relate only how people have perceived and treated this land in the last 200 years; a small insight into the story of the soil, rocks and water that spark so many emotions in the people of this present day.

A Brief History of CAMP COLDWATER
"BIRTHPLACE OF MINNESOTA"
By Dave Fudally

Camp Coldwater is a historic, Minnesota pioneer village site located in south Minneapolis and a part of Fort Snelling State Park.Its boundaries are located approximately due east of the Veterans Hospital, Highway 55 on the west, 54th Street on the north, the Mississippi River on the east, and just outside of the Bureau of Mines southern fence line. The center of historic Camp Coldwater is the cold, crystal clear, flowing spring, for which the historic settlement owes its existence.

The first settlement here was that of the Native American origin. A stone ax, bones, and Indian trails surround the spring. Just west of the spring was the sacred hill called TAKU WAKAN TIPI, "THE DWELLING PLACE OF THE GODS".

The second settlement was the U.S. military. On May 5th, 1820, the 5th U.S. Infantry under Colonel Leavenworth moved to this area to escape the unhealthy conditions they had endured at their earlier stockade on the Minnesota River. The clear, cold spring water helped restore the health of the men and their families who lived in tents, elm bark huts, and small barracks. They conducted much of their military business here for four years while building Fort Snelling. The military continued to rely on the spring's fresh water through the 1800s. They used horse drawn wagons and later built a stone water tower and underground pipes to transport water to Fort Snelling. The military transferred control of the spring to the Veterans Administration in 1945.

The third settlement began in 1821. Families who left the Red River Selkirk Colony at Pembina were allowed by Colonel Snelling to settle around the spring. About 500 people from this colony came down the Red River and rested here from their journey. Some continued moving, onto other settlements. The settlers that remained at Camp Coldwater built farms, raised cattle, and sold provisions to the army. They built trading posts, steamboat landings, a hotel, blacksmith shops and stables. Many settlers were employed by the fort as mail carriers, Indian interpreters, missionaries, trail guides, servants, and baby-sitters. The families that settled here were of Swiss, French, Canadian, Irish, English, Native American, and Black heritage.

The settlers were allowed to remain at Camp Coldwater until 1840. They were forcibly removed by the military because the settlers were selling whiskey to the Indians and soldiers, and they were using up the local fuel and food supplies near the fort. The B. F. Baker Trading Post was still available as a hotel after this time and was converted to a larger hotel called the St. Louis House. Norman Kittson, with others, located another trading post nearby.

Through all of these years, while the great State of Minnesota was growing, the land around Camp Coldwater Spring remained pretty much untouched. The spring still flows out from the side of the hill, winding its way past where settlers once lived, flowing past where B. F. Baker's Trading Post stood, past the stables, past the Peter Quinn homesite, and as it passes the Perry homesite it descends over a hidden waterfall finally becoming part of the mighty Mississippi. A rare sight this is, that with all the development within this state, you can stand near this spring and see the footprints of our heritage. The winding spring and these pioneer homesites still exist since their beginning.

Through the 1950s and 1960s there was talk of preserving Camp Coldwater and completing archeological excavations at this historic site. Not much has become of this as the spring became part of the Bureau of Mines property, locked behind gates from 1960 to 1997. The Minnesota Historical Society placed a historical marker at the spring site in 1991 at the urging of citizens. Descendants of these pioneers attended the ceremony and stood upon the homesites of their forefathers.

It is hard to imagine that this spring flows as it always has through history. Everywhere roads, towns, and cities have sprung up leaving no trace of their past. People spreading out over the land forgetting where they came from because there is nothing left to remind them. Politicians clamor "Reclaim the Riverfront" and will spend millions of dollars to try and re-create the land as it once was. People of the cities trying so hard to show they are different rather than the same. Children are taught with school books about the past, and the school books are only a few chosen words which try to describe a past they can no longer use. If those words fail to capture the imagination, the past is lost, and with it the sense of unity with which this state began its existence.

The past is alive at this historical site. You can see where all races lived together, united, coping with nature and building new local governments. You don't have to spend millions to reclaim the Riverfront, it's still pretty much as it was. Most importantly, the children won't have to try to imagine the past. They can see it, touch it, drink from it. They can stand near the spring and step back in time - a time which was the birth of our past.

The Traditional Cultural Property assessment performed by MNDoT contains a summary of land use in the area, from the time of the first European settlers until the present.

When soldiers first arrived in the Fort Smelling area in 1819, they found abundant timber resources in the vicinity. However, their requirements for building material and fuel used up the timber supply ... hardships imposed in procuring an adequate supply for fuel were reported by inhabitants of the fort beginning in the 1830s ... Civilian settlement in the area put further stress on the remaining timber supply. The decline in timber resources continued until the late 1860s even though the military presence was removed for a short time. Historic maps indicate that renewed timber growth was evident within the boundaries of the military reservation by the 1880s. By this time, wood had probably been supplanted by coal as the most important source of fuel and the railroad could ship in building supplies from outside of the Fort Smelling area.

The historical maps of the Fort Snelling area which cover the period between settlement and 1880 consistently depict the project area, including the Four Oak Trees, as open prairie. Maps from after 1880 indicate that expanding woodlands were encroaching onto the prairie ... the Four Oaks is depicted as ... near the edge of the woodland and prairie.

... Changes to the landscape caused by filling and cutting for roads, the railroad, and the trolley line, became apparent during the late nineteenth century... The most significant change to the landscape in the vicinity of the Four Oaks occurred in 1925 when the Veteran's Bureau built a substantial complex of buildings immediately southeast of the trees. [See diagram #1.] A substantial amount of mixed soil derived from the construction event was deposited in the wetland south of the Four Oaks.

By the 1930s the Four Trees had become fenced in as part of the laundry complex. A north addition to the laundry building in the early 1950s further affected the immediate environment around the trees, apparently adding more backfill to the immediate area. In the late 1980s, the Veteran's Administration had the laundry complex demolished and the fence removed. Instructions to the contractors in charge of the demolition were that all trees within the construction limits and on adjacent property should be protected.

DIAGRAM 1.

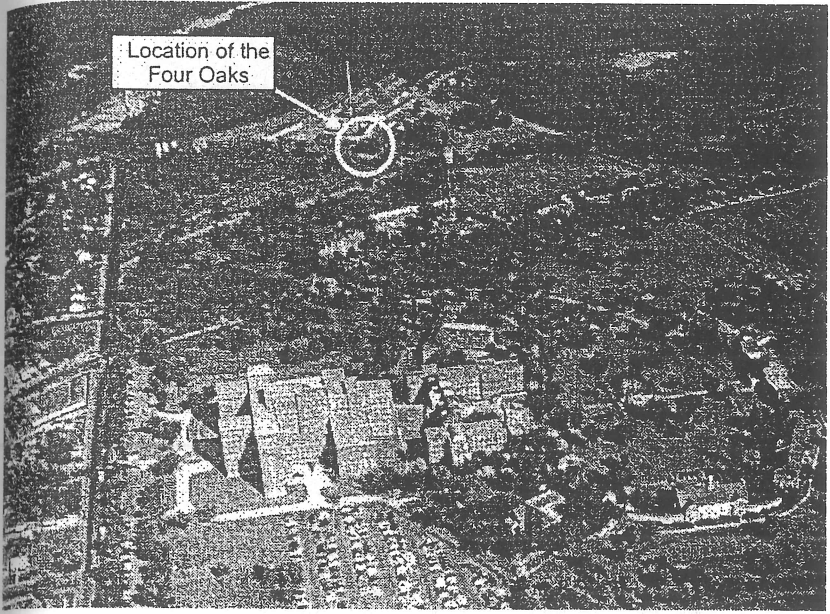
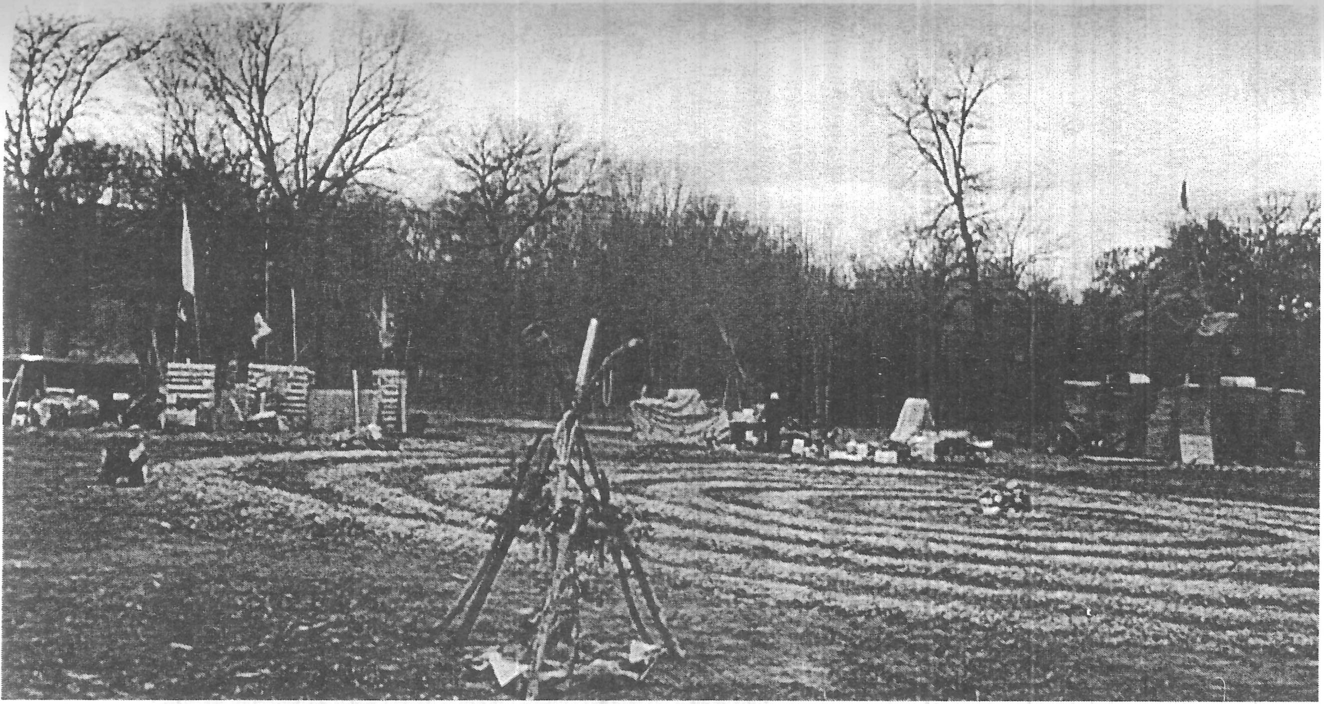

Location of the Four Oaks

Photo courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society



The second camp from a distance in early spring, 1999. From left to right: The Four Trees, the kitchen (made of pallets and plywood), Coldwater Café (in background), the Wiccan walking spiral and alter (in foreground), and the Star Lodge.

Tipis were the housing of choice for many occupants. The Four Trees can be seen in the background.

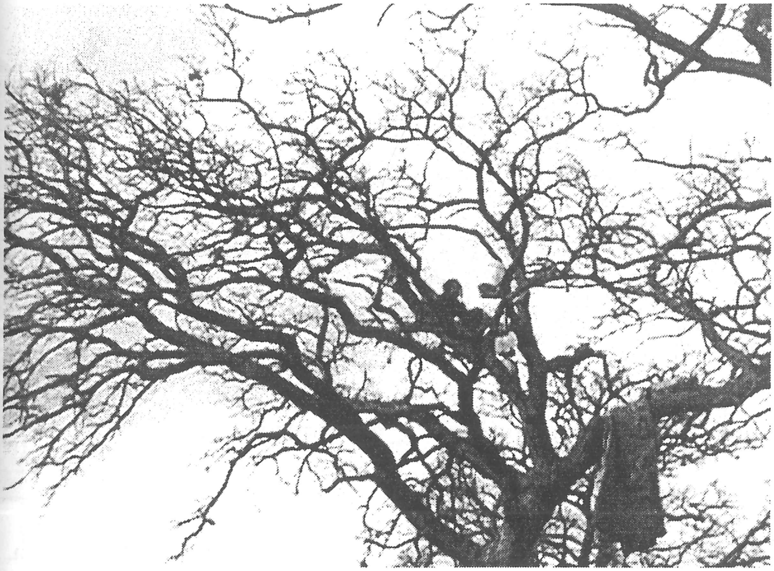
The Four Trees with a tipi in the middle.

Cold Water Cafe

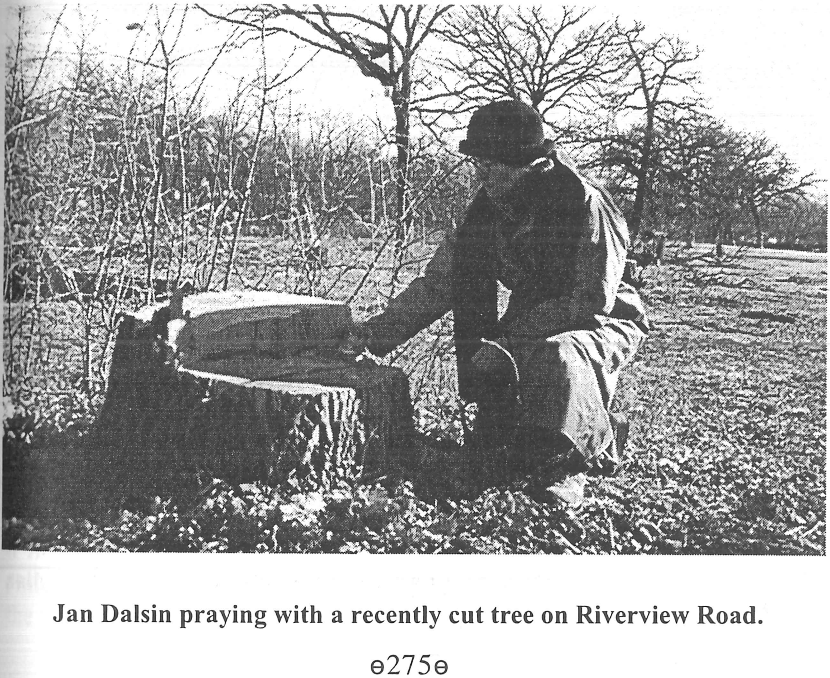
Sister Jane Mcdonald (middle) stands between friends at the Coldwater Café, a mobile kitchen who came out to serve hot food every Sunday for the duration of the second camp.

FREE Coffee

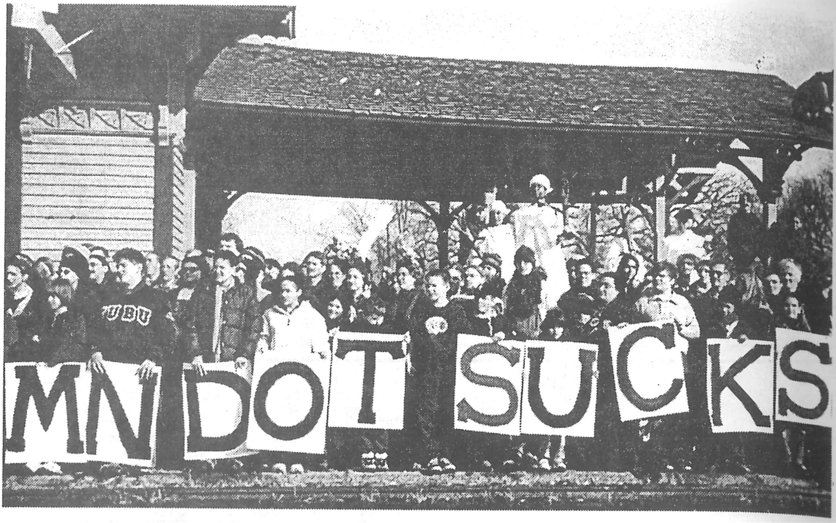
Tree talks with neighborhood residents at an information table at the trailhead by the second camp.



Treesitting on Riverview Road in early spring, 1999.



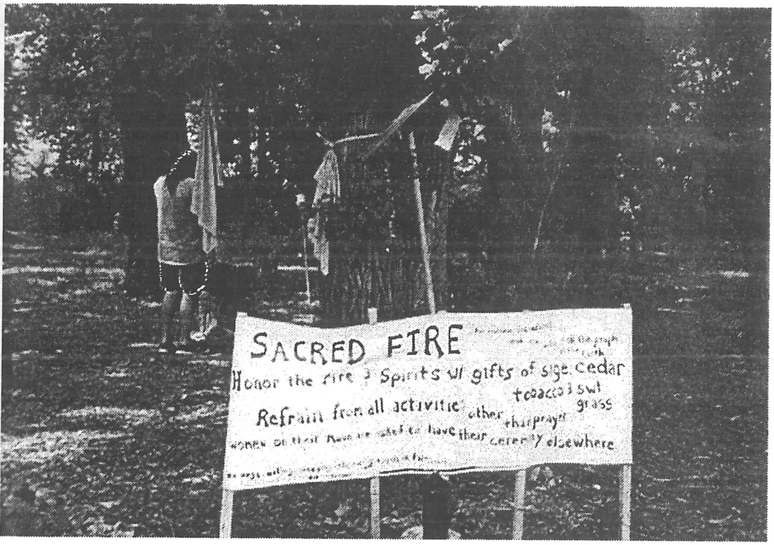
Jan Dalsin praying with a recently cut tree on Riverview Road.



Schoolchildren came up with their own way to express their opinion.

Punks with their multi-tools at the second camp. Second from right is Natalia. In the foreround is a man named Sam with his self-titled "Indian multi-tool".

Summer brought people out to the second camp, and the Star Lodge in the background housed many of them.



Jim Anderson at the Four Trees in the summer of 1999. A sign helped to relate the requests of the Mendota Dakota regarding respect for the Sacred Fire.

PART THREE

How Many cops will it take
to build this road?

The Tree of Life

It is the cracking.
Nothing in the human body
goes on splintering
like the heartwood
of a great tree.
Century oaks
felled in minutes
then chipped
into bullets
aimed at us
trespassing in tree-sits.
Bark is shredded
a water jug explodes.

I curse you
you who plan and hire-on
to rape the land
you don't even know
who your mother is

You motherfuckers.
You never asked permission
you didn't burn it
in the kitchen
You forgot thank you-
forgive me.

Every religion has a tree.
Dakota Sun Dance around
a Cottonwood.
The son of God died on a
cedar.
Buddha sat under a pipal fig.
Place my bones in a pine
box.
Destruction is progress.
Every nation has a tree
the Tree of Liberty.
what happens to the tree
happens to the people.

-Susu Jeffrey

CHAPTER SIXTEEN
The Battle Intensifies
Stories From Summer, 1999

In some ways, it was like a war. Rich versus poor, good versus evil, us versus them. Greed versus, what's the opposite of greed? Yeah! Generosity. Defending land, defending people, defending places, culture, history, as it's changing all around you. It's hard to think about it, but you do think about it a lot, it's just hard to talk about it, I should say.

- Falcon

The First Trees Are Cut: July 27th, 1999

Madeline Gardner

One summer morning, it was pretty early, Emily came in, and I remember hearing in my sleep, "There's 200 cops up at the lagoon." That woke me up fast. I jumped up and put my shoes on and found a bike and rode up there. There was a line of cop cars going up 55 as far as I could see. At that time, they were still starting to put up the orange fence around the lagoon. Someone called the phone tree and notified it right away. I think it was a Monday morning though, so by the time the phone tree got activated, a lot of people had already left the house.

There was a group of us who went back to camp, we had a little meeting, and decided that it would be good if we took some sort of action. The plan we came up with was three of us would go over the fence right by the street where all the police were, and act as a distraction, try and be as loud as possible, try and bring the attention there, and the rest of the people would sneak around the back, and swim across the creek, and hopefully us causing the distraction would give them enough time to climb trees.

I had never really been arrested before, and the adrenaline pumping through my body was unlike anything I'd ever experienced before. The whole world looked different, my job was all I could focus on, everything else just faded away. When we heard the signal, Joe and I and a third person sauntered across the street, and then I didn't see them anymore. It happened so fast, I don't even exactly remember what I did ... I'm pretty sure I slid underneath the fence on my belly, and as soon as I was under, I just got up and ran as fast as I could.

When I had gone over it in my head, beforehand, I figured that the cops would grab me as soon as I crossed the fence. But no one grabbed me. I hadn't planned any further than that! I was running, as fast as I could, I didn't know where I was going, all of a sudden I was very alone, 'cause all the crowd was up beyond the hill, and I can feel there's two cops chasing me! That adrenaline will really do something to you, cause I think that's the fastest I've ever run in my life!

So I figured, well, I'm in here, I'm obviously somewhat faster than the cops, I might as well try and climb a tree. So I did. I saw a tree, and I ran ran ran ran ran, and tried to do the "running up the tree" thing. I had one foot up on the trunk, and my hand grabbed on to the highest branch I could reach, and I was in the process of pulling myself up, when extremely rough and angry hands grabbed me and threw me onto the ground. They threw me onto my belly and stuck a knee in my back, roughly handcuffed me with those white plastic icky cuffs.

I remember being extremely uncomfortable with a big knee in my back. I wasn't scared at all. They told me to get up, and I didn't do it, I just lied there. They grabbed me and pulled me upright, and said, "Walk, walk, you have to walk." I said, "No, this is sacred land, I'm not going to leave willingly." They made fun of me about that over and over again. Then they dragged me over to a van, and some important person, I don't know who it was, screamed at me, "Who's your leader?! Who told you to do this? Who's your leader?" I ignored him, but I remember thinking in my head, `Wow, these people really don't know anything at all about how we function, they're completely ignorant of what we're about and how we do things.' So they threw me in the back of this van and I was in there all alone, and there were no windows.

Soon the van started driving. I didn't know where it went, but I knew it was still inside the police perimeter, it only went a little ways. The first thing I had done when they threw me in the van was take off my handcuffs. They didn't put them on very tight, and I didn't really like them. Then once we stopped again, I started kicking at the door as hard as I could, I was feeling ... it wasn't a panic feeling, it was more, like, 'How dare they lock me up and put me in this van!' I couldn't believe, the nerve of them, to come here, to this park, and cut down all the trees and put me in a cage!! I was shocked, that was the reality of the situation.

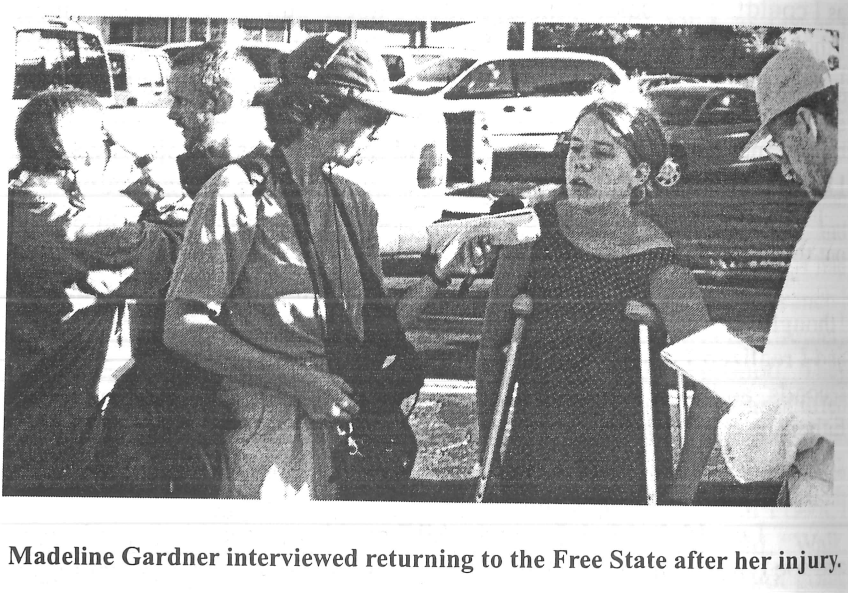
So I started kicking at the door and screaming, as loud as I could, kicking and kicking. They yelled at me, "Shut up! Shut up!" Finally, after that went on for five, ten minutes or so, a cop opened the door. I hadn't planned out anything in my head, but I jumped out and ran as fast as I could! They said, "Oh, shit! She's not in cuffs!" I was running, if I thought I ran fast the time before, this time I was really running fast! I don't know what I thought I was gonna do, or where I thought I was gonna go, but I remember hearing something, the heaviest person running behind me, like this thundering ... And then, he was on top of me, and I hit the ground hard. I wasn't quite sure what hit me, it was really hard ... I was numb. They put me in cuffs, and this time they made sure they put them on tight.

They dragged me, and they were screaming, "Walk! Walk! Walk!" I thought about walking, and I tried to lift one of my legs, and it didn't lift, and I realized I couldn't move it at all. I thought about that for a couple seconds, and then I said, "Um, I can't move my legs, I think I'm hurt." Either the cop didn't hear me or he just ignored me, and he laid me in the grass somewhere. It occurred to me then that I might actually be hurt. I thought maybe I was just imagining it.

I couldn't see the crowd. All I could see was this line of cops, and Joe lying in the grass. He was also handcuffed, and he was looking at me really strangely, and screaming, "Are you all right?" I thought about that for a little bit, and then I said, "No, I think I'm really hurt." I had to tell him that a couple times before he could hear me. I guess he started screaming to the crowd, whom he could see, but I couldn't, that I was really hurt. The crowd got really mad, and I guess put a lot of pressure on the police to get an ambulance or something. I don't know what happened, that's just what I'm told. After a while two paramedics came over. I was laying on my stomach. By that time I started to actually be in pain. They checked me over a little bit, and then asked permission of one of the cops, if he could take my handcuffs off, and he said no.

So we sat there for a long time. I was in a lot of pain. Eventually the ambulance started going and we went and picked up my mother. I didn't know she was there. She came in and looked at me and immediately burst into tears, and said, "Oh my God are you OK?" Of course I said, "Yes, I'm fine Mom." She said, "They told me you ran into a tree!" That made me mad, and I said, "I didn't run into a tree, he fucking tackled me!" My mom said, "Who?" and I said, "The cop did of course!" They made her sit in the front. They thought she was too upset to sit in back.

At the hospital, everything took so long. I remember begging my mother, "Please make them fix it, please, please, please." That's all I could say over and over again. It was taking so long.



Madeline Gardner interviewed returning to the Free State after her injury.

More than four hours after I had gotten hurt, the doctor finally came in. They had given me so many drugs by then, the world was just a haze. I remember being surrounded by people, and then they grabbed my leg and twisted it in a ridiculous way, and all of a sudden this relief just flooded over me, and I became a person again instead of a ball of pain. That was one of the coolest moments ever. I'm alive again! I thought that I could just walk home then. They informed me that I had to be on crutches instead. I ended up being on crutches for a good two months, until October. I remember they kept extending it, waiting to see if the bone would live or die. That was a hard time of wondering if my hip would heal, being in a wheel chair for a while and then on crutches. I was so upset that I couldn't go back to the Free State, cause after that day, a lot of things started happening. I don't really know what happened, I was just home in bed being miserable.

Cher Fields

Summer of '99: we had just returned from a road trip to Mexico to find all these police, sheriffs and state troopers surrounding Hiawatha and 46th, not far from our home. That was our son Jesse's favorite park, where our teenager went when his spirit was troubled to sit under the willows by the creek. I pulled over to find out what was going on, but Jesse refused to get out. Having just driven through all these federal stops in Mexico, where the military is all over the place, I insisted, "This is the US, not Mexico!" to which he responded, "That's just the point!"

Years ago, when we decided to go live in Mexico, people on this side of the border would warn, "They've got banditos. And federales!" We always think problems are somewhere other than here, even inventing our own fears. People don't see domestic and international issues with the same philosophy ...

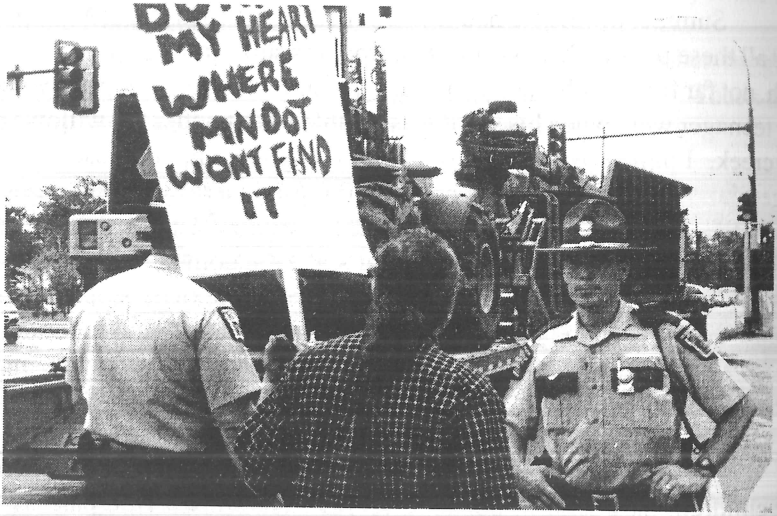
At a time when places of refuge and solitude are so needed by our children, they send in police to forcibly take this idyllic park away from them. No wonder so many young people are disillusioned with the government. This is not how it's supposed to work.

Joe Hesla

I remember one story from right where the creek crosses Highway

55. On the day that they were out there cutting those trees, I was biking back from camp. And I saw that there was a bulldozer out there screwing around, and I just wanted to see what was going on.

There was a state trooper and a man and a woman with a baby, and I said to the state trooper, "What's going on here? They're just going to cut this down?" "Yep. They're just going to clear this area there." And I said, "Boy it's a shame to lose all those trees." But I said it not with an edge in my tone, just sort of conversational. The state trooper kind of stiffened, but he didn't say anything. The young man said, "It's great; it'll make it a lot safer around here." I felt this anger in me when he said that, and I tried to think what to say. I said, "A lot safer? Does it make it a safe world for your kid when you know that all the trees are going to be cut down?" Then this cop said "You can either stop talking or get out of here." But there was a threat in his voice like I would have gotten arrested. I said to him, " Well, why can't I say what I want if he's saying what he wants?" He said something again - that whether it was fair or not in my



July 27th, 1999: Leo Ronneng makes a play on the phrase "Bury my heart at wounded knee", a reference to a massacre of Dakota people in the late 1800s, and a standoff between the U. S. government and the American Indian Movement occured in the 1970s. In the background on the right can be seen the orange fencing surrounding the two-square block area that was cleared on that day.

mind - that he wasn't going to tolerate it.

I toyed with the idea of getting arrested there, but I didn't want to miss my wife's birthday. So I didn't say anything, I just stood there another minute and took off. It was really interesting to see the amount of tension.

Leo Ronneng

When they started to divert the creek and take down some trees up there (46th and Hiawatha), just to do something to make us feel better, we went down there and planted four Cottonwood trees in the four directions in the middle of the night. They had big bulldozers going around the next day, but they went around those things for two or three days before they finally figured out, "Hey these shouldn't be here!" Some of that little stuff was done, not to irritate people but just to let people know, "Hey, we're here, and we do care about things ..."

* * *

Huck

Well, my name's Huck. I'm 23 now, I was 20 when I got to the Free State. I had just left Chicago and was planning on hitchhiking out to Eugene, for lack of anything better to do, planning on going out and applying to the Organizing Institute, to be an organizer, which I'm doing now. I hadn't been to Minneapolis before; I got dropped off there, kind of wandered around Minneapolis, asking folks if there's a place to throw up a tent and curious if there's any kind of social activism going on(!) People said, "Well, there's this place called the Minnehaha Free State, and there's a bunch of hippies sleeping in the woods, and they're trying to stop a highway or something."

The first couple folks I talked to didn't really know much about it, they had just kind of heard of it, probably seen a few clips on the news. Then I ran into a kid named Booger at a bar and gyro joint. He sent me down to the Free State. He said that Earth First! and AIM had a joint occupation. I'd heard of Earth First! in passing, didn't really know much about them, but I was always fascinated with the American Indian Movement; when I was in high school, my mom gave me Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee, said it was one of the most powerful books she had read in college. One of my good friends in high school's mother was working on the Peltier case. So, for me to just run upon an occupation like this was just, like, mind-blowing. I thought that nothing like this would ever happen again.

I walked in about three o' clock in the morning, stumbled in with my backpack. I was goin' the wrong way down the trail and ran into Marshall on a security shift. I think I was heading down towards the river. I didn't really know where camp was, I was just told go down to the dead end and there will be a trail goes up there ... Ran into Marshall, and he respectfully asked me to come back for breakfast in the morning. Went over and put my tent up across the road and went to sleep. I was just really amazed walking in the morning, see the sun coming up over the treeline ... it was just kind of a very impressive sight when you walk into camp, the Star Lodge off to your right, kind of peeking out over the trees. This was June of '99.

It was interesting, because it came at a time in my life when I was in transition, and it didn't have much in common with the path that I saw myself taking. It was a big turning point in my life.

Unplanned

I ended up coming back, leaving a few times and coming back. One of the times coming back [was July 27th, and] after two weeks of being there, they started cutting on the north end of camp, the area just north of the Cottonwood Tree. I had just been put on security a few weeks before that, was still kind of getting integrated, getting to know folks. I wasn't really planning on getting arrested that day. When I heard there was cutting on the north end, I went up after the cops had already cordoned off the area. I didn't really think about it much, but somebody handed me a U-lock, and I ran across the line. Nobody really knew who I was, but people were still willing to trust me and back me up, do my jail support, make sure I got out the next night.

Everyday life

It was the first time I had ever really taken a risk, where I knew that I was putting myself at the risk of serious bodily harm, or possibly getting a broken neck, which after a time seemed to be kind of matter of fact for most people in camp, we took a lot of risks. People didn't raise their eyebrows when someone almost got killed, it kind of became routine after a period of time, being pain complianced, cops putting people in jeopardy, having no regard for their lives, but doing everything they could to get people out of their lockdowns.

Freedom: I don't know how to express that feeling. When you say to people, "It just became routine for people to risk their lives everyday," people have one of two reactions. Either they say, "Oh, yeah, whatever," or they say, "Oh, wow, really? That's really intense!" I just want to express what the feeling was. It wasn't like nothing and it wasn't really intense. It just was.

The Sit-down: July 28th, 1999

Sister Jane McDonald

Another vivid memory: at the intersection of Bridgeman's, we were trying to stop traffic. At one point Bear came up to me, he was looking for another person in the circle to go out and stop the traffic. So I remember taking Bear's hand, and we looked up and here was a huge big yellow Mac truck! Sure enough it was profound. We sat down on the street.

The police came out to dismantle us and get us arrested. A policeman came and took me from that circle and started to take me on the opposite side of the street as the people who were being arrested, who in my memory were mostly all Native American. I was a white elder woman in this circle. I knew immediately what he was doing, and I said, "No, I'm with these people. I'm choosing arrest to be with these people." That to me was a very poignant, racist moment. He took me and did not arrest me, and they arrested that circle of Native people.

Darlene Jackson

I had a lawn chair. I decided I had to do this, because of my promise to do everything I can for Mother Earth. Next thing I knew I was pushed so hard. My hands and my right leg hit the asphalt. My right leg turned completely black. My little finger got out of joint, and that's the way it's been since.

When I was in jail, I told them about my medication. What they did is they quadrupled it, so I was out most of the time. All I did was sleep.

Lynn Levine

This is Lynn Levine, and I will tell this story about that very same day. I was standing next to Doreen Day, the Native woman who carries the water. We were both on our way to work that day, and she was standing next to me on the sidewalk. She said, "I have to go to work."

She had a cup of coffee. I was standing and watching all the violence out in the street, and suddenly, she was knocked down by the police. When she was knocked down her coffee flew out of her hand, and she was accused of throwing coffee at a police officer, and she was arrested. That was really shocking. Even though I know there's racism, and I've seen it...

Jessie

My name's Jessie. I was down at camp when I was about 13. I was involved through the Mendota Mdewakanton Dakota Community. I'm a member of the community. I went down on my first time, and everyone was friendly, so I kept going back, and joined the protest after a while. I wish I was there for the raids, but I was at school. Kind of crappy. The people down there were really nice people. They listened, and were teaching people the ways of how they lived. I got more involved in helping in the last year.

[It was important to me to be down there] 'cause of the Four Oaks down there. When I was down there, there was a really good feeling of where I was at. I felt safe from anything when I was at the Four Oaks. I could feel the spirits in there, and a lot of the power.

We did the roadsit, that's when I got beat up. It all happened so fast ... I got beat up by four cops, two state and two Minneapolis. [I was] 13. They thought I was 18 years old with a fighting history. Then they didn't give me medical help until about 25 minutes after, when the elders and that started yelling at the paramedics to help me out.

A lot of good things happened there that probably won't happen anywhere else. Peaceful, everyone helped with what needed to be done, respectful ... You can't find that stuff at most of these powwows you go to. I travel the state, and they don't even care who you are. They only care about they. Down at camp, everyone helped out everyone. Even the crooks helped everyone out. There was a lot of people of different races there helping everyone out, like the four colors of the medicine wheel. There was always a place for people to sleep down there, a lot of places you can't get that ...

Everyone at that place helped me learn more of my own heritage. When I was down there I probably learned more than I ever would in school. I liked being down there 'cause I was being taught different ways than the school would teach me, and the different ways of the cultures that were there. It was a good thing to go to.

* * *

Jim Anderson

We had went to a park board meeting, trying to get them not to swap land. (That's what they did, they swapped all the trees in the park for that damn overpass, the land bridge, because per square foot, they said they got just as much or more back, because they put the tunnel under there and then grassed over it.) So when we were at that meeting they (MNDoT) said, "Oh, no, we're cutting down two or three trees." That's what they told the park board, and all of us. So that first day when they started cutting on 46th, they randomly cut everything. That's when our people started to run out and protect it, and that's when Maddie got tackled and her hip displaced, and all kinds of bad things happened. They cut hundreds of trees. The people in the neighborhood were outraged, especially on the other side of the creek where they had planted all those trees to try and block the view of the road. They came in and cut everything they had planted, that were like 20 years old.

So then we had a meeting with [the neighbors], and they asked what they could do. We said, "We told you. It's a little late now, for you to be so concerned." And from then on and all the way through the park, it was like commando raids on the trees. They would see us grouped up, and go whack a few trees somewhere else.

Freedom

On Treesitting

Treesitting was one of the few ways that we could be one step ahead. We are in the Midwest, and our trees are short, and people could be removed by cherry-picker with little physical effort, but that kind of concerted action from the goons always took a long bureaucratic process, and so it was well worth our time, and a recommended tactic for any occupation.

The people putting the sits up had for the most part never done it before, and if they were lucky they got a few hints from someone who had figured it out a few months before. We used polypropylene rope and old batting cage nets. We had not much protocol, but some, and our heads were screwed on tight, and nobody ever got hurt that I know of.

With warm weather came a huge influx of people as expected, and we sometimes had 50 people residing at camp. About that time we began to realize that construction was starting as far away from us as they could manage, and so our area to defend ballooned out, to about a mile-long strip. This became tricky to put it lightly, but we began to put up sits, one by one, everywhere. We probably had around 30 total, and maybe 15 at the peak.

Then after July 26th, 1999, when they cut all the trees by the creek north of the Cottonwood, (not to make room for the highway but to make a god damned land bridge and thus fulfill their legal obligation to the park board of equal exchange of square fucking feet), we established sits that were occupied 24/7, for the most part of course. These were all between the creek and camp, as we figured they were pushing south.

It was difficult to maintain sits so far from camp, so we had a "com car", a parked car with a CB radio that reached to camp, and people in it 24/7 doing support for and monitoring the treesits. The sits, com car, ground support and security used every one of those 50 people, but the strategy proved effective, shown both by the efforts of the police to persuade us to come down, and the eventual start of demolition around the trees that were occupied.

A powerful place

A classic line and prevailing theory of people who wanted the road was that we were all from out of town, and thus didn't matter. First of all it wasn't true, the resistance was neighborhood based, and many people who joined who were from the metro area. Further, I realized one day that many people who were from out of town ended up staying and deciding to live in Minneapolis! This says something, almost lends more strength to the cause than if there were no people from out of town. The road was so wrong, not only did people from the area not want it, but people actually moved to the area to join in not wanting it, and stayed to continue not wanting it. Man.

Kudos to the Holiday Station

They let us come in their store, day and night, barefoot, without buying anything, and poop in their bathroom, without blinking an eye. Best corporate service I ever had, and I don't know what we would've done without them, let alone on the night the biffy got burned to the ground, not by us.

Marigold Avery

I'm Marigold, and I grew up in Milwaukee. I had heard about the Free State from my friend, who grew up in South Minneapolis. He mentioned it a few times, but it never really registered in my mind, like, "Oh, there's these people fighting a road. OK, whatever..." It was real separate from me until I got an e-mail that was an action alert from Jimmy. It said, "We need people here! We need people here now!" I had been planning on going, to visit at least, during the Black and Green Conference, which was the first week in August '99. So I decided, "I'm gonna go, though, and leave it open-ended, see what happens", because of this alert. It was really Jimmy's words, I just remember, pulling me.

I showed up for the conference, but I didn't get to the conference place, the Bedlam, first, I went to the camp first, and I never really participated in the conference at all after that! I get there, and I was just in awe, of what was going on. I immediately wanted to become involved.

People were talking about the trees, and I got taken up to- well, given a bicycle to ride, and I rode up to the park to see the treesits, and they were like, "Yeah, you could climb, you could be in the Cottonwood tonight!" I'm like, "What? OK, I can climb trees, like, a little bit, but ..." I didn't know how to use a harness or anything. At that time all they had was this rope and PVC ladder. I put one foot on the ladder and it stretched about six feet down, and I went, "uhhh," I'm looking up 50 feet in the air going, "No way." They're like, "Well, OK, we'll put you in the starter tree."

The maple was much easier to get into, after I was shown, "You know, climb the rope like this." Once I was up there, I knew I wanted to stay there for a while. I got to because, nobody showed up, of course, to replace me. But my first night in a tree was really an ideal evening. I slept really well, although I kept expecting someone to show up in the middle of the night to relieve me. Teatree was supposed to, I think ... But after a little while I realized I'd rather just stay there than even have to get up and move.

Then at dawn, Teatree shows up with a bunch of food, and I'm like, "Ohhh ..." She had homemade soymilk, and cereal, and fruit, and all kinds, just an abundance of food. She said, "I'm sorry I couldn't make it last night," in her little Teatree way, and I could not hold that against her at all.

It was just a fabulous experience, being up there alone, in the park, in the middle of the night, and feeling so, just at home ... Then I stayed, for four months!! Why did I stay, I just wanted to add that it was a lot like where I grew up, because it was near a river. I grew up in the Milwaukee River Valley, in the parks around the river, constantly by myself, truckin' around there. So it was like a natural transition, but it was bigger! The trees were bigger, the valley was bigger, and the river was bigger, so it was more enveloping.

Ticketed in prayer

My second story that stands out the most when I think about the Free State is the morning that David had his heart attack. Actually, it was the day after David had his heart attack. 'Cause at this point, we were going out onto Riverview Drive and occupying the trees first thing in the morning. Just at dawn. We'd get up, so we could beat the cops there, and actually make it into the trees.

One morning I wasn't involved because I think I was in a tree somewhere, probably at the North Camp instead. David, who never climbed the trees, and had this "I respect what you're doing, but I just don't participate in it" kind of stance, happened to climb a tree, and then started having a heart attack in the tree. Eventually he came down out of the tree, and Austin helped him, and they finally gave him help and took him to the hospital ...

But the next day, I went out there to help people get into the trees, and I was working on doing ground support for that area. That was my objective for the day. Ground support being, taking care of the people in the trees, and bringing them food ... as much as we could, if the police decided that we could, that day, you know?

David had been in one of the two pines that the camp was originally named for, Camp Two Pines, the first camp, the old first campgrounds. They cut the tree after David was taken away that day, so I helped Austin into the remaining pine tree the next day. I was thinking, yeah I need to hurry, but the police weren't around yet, we hadn't seen them yet, so, I walked over to the stump of the tree that David had been in, and I pulled out my tobacco and placed a little on the stump. I was sort of lost looking at the stump, and then I hear, "Marigold, watch out!" I look up and there's this cop car racing towards me. I try and get to the sidewalk, but I get cut off by the cop car. I decided to stop, because there's a cop car in front of me, and the cop jumped out of the car, grabbed me, pushed me up against the car and cuffs me. He put me in the back seat and said, "What do you want to happen to you? Do you want to get a ticket, and this could be easy for all of us? Or do you want to go to jail? It seems like everyone wants to go to jail, here." He was a real asshole. He took my Radio Shack personal transceiver.

I was like, "Ummmmmm, I think I'll take a ticket." He goes, "Alright!" and starts writing out this ticket for trespassing. I think I tried a little bit to explain to him that I was praying, and thinking about my friend who had a heart attack and was in the hospital having surgery. He didn't want to hear it, of course, so he gives me the ticket. He doesn't give me my radio back or give me a receipt, like the police are supposed to do when they take your personal property. I never did get it back.

Rory

I remember once walking to the sweat lodge to do something 'cause there was gonna be a sweat that night. There was this berm of dirt all around the lodge and altar and you kinda had to go through an opening in the berm to get in. It was all sunny and nice out and as the lodge came in to view I saw sitting by the lodge Purple, Nettle and a Native woman, Sharon I think. Now Purple and Nettle were as about as crusty and punk as could be but here they were, wearing these long skirts that the women were asked to wear at ceremonies, sitting and listening to this woman, and learning how to make prayer ties for the lodge. I just remember what a feeling of beauty and wonder that I had when I saw that.

So the sweat happened, and later after we all got out and were making a circle around the fire to smoke the pipe, here comes this ever increasing noise of helicopter blades, just getting louder and louder. Then suddenly there it was, a police helicopter coming right towards the camp, then right over us. It had it's spot light on us and was really low to the ground, like maybe 20 feet above the nearest tree. It just hung there while we smoked the pipe. The wind from the blades was whipping all around, the light was blinding and you could barely hear anything else but those blades.

If you've ever sweated before you can imagine the absolute vulgarity and disgust we felt with this fucking cop chopper buzzing us right in the middle of a purification ceremony. But that's just the power I think that we had there that was so threatening. So threatening that they had to go and try to intimidate and interrupt us learning these sacred ways being shared with us.

At the camp the AIM and Mendota folk were always inviting us to their ceremonies. When I got to camp one of the first things I remember is Red Sky throwin' me in the lodge to clean me up, in more ways than one. When we had the great ceremony at the Four Trees in the fall, they asked three of us crusties and a Native woman to climb up the Four Trees and put an eagle feather on the top of each one.

In a lot of ways all these sweats and teachings just saturated the later camp, and at least for me, woke up this deeper sense of self, especially about being a descendent of Eire. Those ceremonies really stirred this universal connection with the Earth and a connection to the spirits that had been beaten down in us long ago through years and generations of civilizing and Christianizing. Seeing that commonality in our past with these Native people and their current struggle really helped keep what shaky glue we had together, and kept the camp from completely falling apart.

I think a lot of good exchange of culture and understanding happened at camp, even under all the controversy. I know too that a lot of Mendota folk picked up on our burning passion for the Earth, so it went both ways. Some of us are still a part of their greater community to this day, and so that spirit still lives on.

Owen

"I'm thinking about being up in that tree, up in the north basswood", says Owen.

"The so-called Ash," Cricket adds.

"Yeah, the false Ash. Just bad information. Amazing how persistent it was, too. We knew nothing about trees, this is true," says Owen.

"The Camp Two Pines? They were spruces." Cricket notes. Everyone laughs.

"Beautiful," returns Owen. "So, I was up in a tree at a certain point. They had just cut down all the trees around it. I think this was probably three or four days after they cut down a little runt of a bur oak that used to stick over the road a little bit. It was near the basswood. It was lying on its side.

So anyway, whoever that construction company was, they had a big, yellow machine with a claw on the end of it. We had some discussion surrounding this machine, concerning the actual, literal earth rape that was going on with this machine and the violence of it. It had an arm and a whirring blade on the end and it would claw down into the ground, it would take out the stumps in that way. Just chew them up and shoot them into little particles. It was easier for them than pulling them up.

This guy was going around, doing all the stumps around there for a couple days. He was a young guy, maybe 20 or something, baseball cap wearing Joe, or whatever. He figured out that he could shoot the particles in the direction of the treesit, including rocks and dirt and whatever else was in the ground. Glass and whatnot. So he got kind of a kick out of this and he started shooting at us in the treesit.

We had hanging jugs of water all over the place, and one day, one of the particles came up and shot a hole about an inch in diameter in the water jug and it sprayed out half of the water. So mostly we reacted to that by staying on the other side of the tree. You know, if we stay on the other side of the tree, nothing is going to hit us right. We'll just have our tarps torn up and our water jugs burst and stuff like that.

One day he got around to the stump of that little burr oak. He was really close to my tree, he was like 20 feet away. I got out on this branch. I was just sick of sitting behind there because that made it so easy for him to play his game. So I went out on that branch, looked him right in the eye and said, "Alright, what are you gonna do, are you going to shoot them at me?" He went ahead and did it anyway. I don't remember that I got injured or anything, but I just stood there. We even waved at each other at a certain point.

I just had this enormous detachment from the whole thing. I felt like he did too, where we realized that we were playing some kind of game, like were just on different sides of this game, just like hey, checking in, wavin'. Like, "How is your side doing today." "Well, we're doin' this thing." "Yeah, we're doin' this thing. So hey, it's good to see you." Ya know? [Laughs] And I'm still standing there, I'm not yelling at him or giving him the finger or jumping down and trying to get into the cab and beat him up. All these things I could've done.

Fall day, warm, crisp ... bright sun, blue sky ... wood smoke ...
Wind from the North carrying sounds of machinery,
Carrying dust trickling in sunshine and shadows,
Like a shaft of sunlight in a dusty room,
Covering my skin in a layer of dust.
I look at my bare arms, the golden hairs in the sun
    wondering ... what is filling the air, covering my arms
        Sawdust
        Sawdust.
Sinking feeling. Everything stops.
I am covered in the living ashes of my friends.
The machines!
The trees, massacred, bodies lying on the ground
In piles, in pieces, in the chipper, in the wind, on my skin.

How to describe the feeling, this entwining of souls- we and the
    trees?
The pain of sitting in them in their last few days of living beauty.

Doomed, full of life. Me helpless except to be there, to listen, bear witness, Remember.
Climbing them, wrapping our bodies around their skin.
Watching from their perspective the morning twilight, sunrise and crowsong, humans and dogs, police and cars, and those who understand ... speaking the language of the trees.

Watching the trees fall down around us, machine blades dripping with the sap life blood.
Watching the trees witness it all.
Walking, walking, crying through the labyrinth of stumps, seeing the sorrow offerings of those who know ... their flowers, sage and tobacco mingled with mine.

SHAME

"I am sorry you can't feel that", I say to the cop holding me back as we watch the maple who fought, held on tight to her life, to her roots.
The man/machine getting frenzied ... my soul and hands burning.
Three cops surround me. I shrug his hand off my arm. I am not running.
My role here is to watch. My friend. Die.
Moments later, after she's thrown into a pile, I run up a small tree, and I start to bleed, blood running down my leg on the tree about to die.
We are one ... their dust on my skin, still flowing with life.

It takes a long time for a tree to die after it has been cut.
They were still alive in their piles.
    Still alive in their fucking chippers.

Alive on the wind.
Alive on my skin

-Tree

Water

These trees have acted as my council, my guidance.
All arrows pointing on the road to myself.

People talk about going home, shift of consciousness. But I wonder, when this takes effect, when the battle is won, what will we be left with?

When there is a death of anything- a person, a tree, a hope, it is not that which you mourn (because it is now free) it is you, it is us that is left in this world without. That is why we break, cry, crumple- fall to the ground in loss.

It is also our nature to weep along with our mother, who mourns her passing children and is distraught by the conditions her remaining children live in.

But this present life- there is still hope to be found- careful! Don't breathe too hard for fear it will be extinguished- kindle that fire and put it in your heart. What a funny thing- there is joy in the struggle! And the transformations! Acting on what you believe lights a fire, and when you pass through the fire, you are lighter when you come out.

I look around me and I see angels! Angels around the morning fire, angels chopping wood, angels up in trees, angels in my bed. It amazes me beyond belief. I think: What good company I keep! And I hold my good fortune to my heart. What days these are! What a life!

Lynn Levine

In terms of the upheavals, when you'd go down there, and you would've lost so much in the last day, that very often I couldn't tell where I was anymore. The earth had been so violently disrupted, and the roads had changed … You'd come down and you were going to meet by the spring, and you couldn't find the spring.

I remember one time I was very touched, [Jane] brought one of the older men, and he was having such a hard time. He kept saying, "I don't know where I am, I feel like I don't know where I am." I put that into words for him. I said, "The land is so disrupted, none of us know where we are anymore." And he turned to me, and came out of his daze for a moment, and said, "That's right." It was sad for me, but it was that much sadder, because it was so confusing for him that it disrupted his whole sense of reality.

John Kolstad

Now going to July of '99, Emily Lindell was running down the railroad tracks. She was jumped by a police officer, who she described as very large. Two other officers got on top of her and held her down with their knees, against the railroad ties, and one officer grabbed her by the hair and repeatedly smashed her face into the ground and into the railroad ties. Now that's a vicious assault by a person in our community on a young woman, for which there is absolutely no justification. This police officer is a criminal, and should be prosecuted as such.

Greg Strandmark

My name is Gregory Earl Strandmark. I am a member of the Mendota Mdewakanton Dakota Community. I knew that I was Dakota as early as I can recall. My dad would tell me about it, tell me that I was the descendant of a great Sioux chief. After all the research I did, I found out that's chief Wabasha. When the first white people got up here he was the head chief of all the Mdewakanton Dakota tribes. My dad had that right, but he could never pronounce the name of the tribe. He told me about how my great-grandfather used to trap, and told us to go talk to our great-grandmother. That interested me and my brother, so we did. We got traps that my great-grandfather had, and we proceeded to lose them all, so all those antique traps are gone! That's where that got started.

Then somewhere around the mid-70s, we were only about 14 years old, but we still had to pay six dollars for a trapping license. We figured we shouldn't have to pay that since we were Sioux. We tried to get my Grandma to get us enrolled. Finally in the 80s we got her pushed into trying to get some stuff together, and we tried to sign up at the Lower Sioux, and we got turned down at that time.

Then we moved out of the state and forgot about it for awhile, moved back, started doing some research on it. One reason was the possibility of enrolling in Shakopee. You have to go through a lawsuit to get in. You need all this documentation. So me and my ma went and did a lot of research, discovered who the chief we descended from [was], learned a lot of stuff, and in the process got a computer. We did a little search [on the internet] and discovered that there was a Mendota Mdewakanton Dakota Community. This was about a year after they filed their petition, around September of '98. I called Linda, talked to her a little bit, heard about the Unity Ride coming that year, and said, "OK, I'll come on down."

Me, my mom and my dad came down that day and met Bob, and Linda and the rest of the group. That was the first time I realized who was trying to save those trees down there. I'd heard a little bit about it here and there in the news, but didn't know anything about it [really]. So I paid a little more attention to it, did what I could to support … I've always been a big activist as far as writing my congressman … so I started my letter campaign.

I was working as a custodian at the time, so I didn't really have [much time]. Then all of a sudden I became unemployed. That was in the summer of '99, when they first blocked the highway and they arrested 40 people in that one day. I said, "Whoa, whoa, those are my people," and I wasn't working at the time, so I piled up my truck and came down to camp. It was my people that were getting arrested. To me, I feel it was my duty, like when I write to my senator. I did my writing, but at this point I could come down and help. I was there for three-and-a-half months of exciting times. Getting chopped by a chainsaw, getting beat up by the cops for the first time in my life … I had never been arrested before, no criminal record whatsoever …

The parts I like were, I met a lot of really nice people. People that … I was never really against tree-huggers per se, if you want to use that word, but I know if I was sitting up in a tree and I was hunting, I wouldn't be too happy with someone hugging my tree. I've always been a very open-minded person. So I got down to camp, and here are all these hippies, as the police would call them, hanging out down there. I got to know them all. I got to know a lot of nice people. Went to my first sweat down there. That was real fun and enjoyable.

I would be down [at camp] for three or four days at a time, leave for a couple days, and then come back. One day, a couple days after I was back home, I'm taking a shower, and I'm trying to remember all the tribes of the seven council fires. All of a sudden I'm starting to smell smoke. You know how your clothes smell from the fire, but after a day or so it goes away. So I was starting to smell smoke and thinking, 'That's kind of strange, this long after …' All of a sudden I start hearing this singing, it's going around me in a circle. All I could think of was that it was the old ones trying to reconnect with me. I can't say it was a vision, because a vision is something different, but it was something, something spiritual, and it told me that I was doing the right thing.

This area means a lot to me and my family. We've been here some 200 years. My Native side has been here 500 or 600 years, my white side since 1795 or so. They can't take that away. They'll talk about [us] trying to get recognition and say, "Oh, they just want a casino." I got rejections in the 80s, that was before the casinos. It isn't the casino that I'm after, there's something more in there.

From the research that I did, I had come across things that said this area was a burial ground. It was Morgan's Mound. Seth Eastman's wife, Mary Eastman, wrote about it. It's definitely a known historical site and burial ground, Taku Wakan Tipi, which is, "the dwelling place of the gods." The god that they were referring to was Punke Tehu, which is the water god. The best that I've been able to research on it is, that's his dwelling place, and his entrance is the spring at Camp Coldwater. That's where he comes out. There's a reason why he comes out, I don't know it that thoroughly.

Jim Anderson

This part's about Antonio, he was a young drifter that came into camp. He was kind of hard-nosed, and he talked all this shit, like he was tough, and he had shot cops, and beat people up and all that, and he started to scare people. At first we welcomed him into our community, and he was there for a long time. He felt at home, I think. If you came there and helped out, you were welcome. Everyone had to do their share to keep it going. Antonio did that for a while, but that mean streak in him kept bubbling out a little bit at a time, and it got to be where a lot of the women were very uncomfortable with him.

I got back from a ceremony at Prairie Island one night, and there was a circle. They were circled around Antonio, and he was crying, holding his knife, and saying he wasn't gonna leave, no one could make him leave, cause this was a sacred place and he was gonna stay and protect it no matter what we said. I didn't know what was going on, but Flo and a few of the other women asked me to talk to them, and when I did, they told me the stories of the things Antonio said.

When I confronted him with it, he said, "Well, I'll kick your ass then." I said, "Well that's exactly why you have to leave, because we're practicing nonviolence here. I could kick you ass, I'm not afraid of you, but I'm not going to fight you, because that's against what we're doing here. You're just going to have to leave." Then he got really upset.

Then he asked me to go for a walk with him. I said, "I'll go for a walk with you, but leave that knife here. I'm not gonna go for a walk in the woods with anybody that's mad at me with a big knife, and I don't have one. I'm not that foolish." So he did, and then we went and talked. He was feeling really bad, crying, you know. He was just trying to tell his side of the story. I just kept telling him, "That's all well and good, but you have to leave." He finally did leave, after I told him we would have to call the police if he didn't.

After he left he kept terrorizing us at camp. He would come and run around the woods at night, making us chase him. We were losing a lot of energy, so I told people, "Forget him. If he wants to run around in the dark at night, let him! If he comes into camp, we'll escort him out again, or call the police." The police had told us, if there was anybody that bothered us, they would help. It was strange, but we had that kind of rapport with a lot of the good police. They supported us, because we were nonviolent, and we were telling the truth the whole time.

So we came to find out after, that Antonio was wanted out east somewhere for the murder of a woman and a man, a young couple that had helped him out. They were murdered assassination-style in their trailer house. [He was arrested after the camp was over, and the head State trooper called to ask if anyone from camp was missing!]

Mary Weitz

A lot of our people came from an environmental background, and wanted to protect various places in Minneapolis, and had been attending

Watershed meetings for years. With their help we started working together to try and save the spring.

So we were back in the Legislature again. (The Mendota Native Americans who we worked with previously declined to come down. They said that they would do it through prayer, ceremony, and supporting us, but to actually come down there like they did before, and be lied to, was just not the way they were going to save the spring.) So we went down, and Mark Gleason, a representative, (this was in his area), he wanted to help us save it. So we started feeling out the situation, and found out that we still had a lot of support down there! People actually felt bad that MNDoT had bulldozed us, every chance they had.

Mark said, just start working on it. So we were trying to get our legislators to write a law for us, but they all have pretty heavy agendas, and then we met some women down there that wrote their own law and were peddling that. Susu was down there with me, and I said, "Well, we've got to write our own law, and we'll include everything we think is necessary to save the spring." So Karen Clark introduced us to a legal attorney up on the sixth floor of the State office building, and we went up there, and showed him the old law, the one for the Traditional Cultural Property status.

So there were five things we wanted in this law. We wanted this Traditional Cultural Property. We wanted to protect the flow of the spring. If they're going to build a road, there is enough engineering technology out there, that they could put in a road that would not destroy the spring. They have studies, there's hydrologists that told us they can do it. Maybe it's going to cost some money, but let them do it right. Then we wanted to secure the land of its historic value.

So we wrote up the law, and Mark was ready to author it, but we didn't have a Senate author, and we needed one. Jane Ranum was working on racial profiling, and this was her area, but she just said, "I can't carry this law. I'm way over my limit as far as the legislation I'm trying to push."

Then Julie Sabo was elected in Carol Flynn's place. Carol Flynn had wanted her successor to be Lisa Becolli, who had the strong support of the DFL but we went to the caucus and ran our own candidate. It was John Kolstad, who had been down to camp on a number of occasions and was very concerned with what was going on. When the votes came out, surprisingly, Julie Sabo was almost as strong as Lisa Becolli, but John Kolstad took about 10%, and he needed 60% to get the endorsement. So he decided maybe he didn't have a true chance of winning the election, so he said, "If they want to talk to me, then maybe I can swing my support one way or the other."

Now Lisa Becolli didn't even think she needed to talk to us. She thought what they were doing out there was just fine. Julie Sabo did talk to us, and she agreed to the three requests that John made of her. It was to protect the spring and try to save as much as we possibly could. John was also concerned because there was such a heavy presence of police when they went in there to raid.

The fine art of lobbying

In the lobbying process, we set up appointments with legislators. These bills pass through a number of committees, and what I've always tried to do is touch base with each person on the committee, if it's possible. These are busy people, and they have a lot of issues, and sometimes they have a lot of their own personal agenda. You can pull them off the floor, and you can pull them out of some meetings, and you can't pull them out of caucus. We write them notes and say "Hey, could you come talk to us."

People come down there, they're angry, they're disturbed, and the legislators have to address everything, and they have to try to listen and take it all in, although I don't think some of them listen very well. You get their attention mostly by having the truth on your side. We went to public meetings, we did everything you do as a citizen who is concerned. We played by the rules. In fact one of the representatives said to me, "It's disturbing that MNDoT does things, when the majority of the people in the area that they're working in really don't want this." He thinks that there should be something to address the situation.

I guess in the beginning our legislation was considered controversial because we were going against these people who had this design for a road. But yet we had so much ground support, so many different organizations, Sierra Club, people for clean water, just all kinds of groups, that were calling. We were very, very controversial. The fact that Carol Flynn and Tom Workman, who were chairs of the transportation committee, wanted to suppress hearing our bill, because they were in agreement with MNDoT, wasn't necessarily working for them. People know when someone is trying to suppress something that has a huge popular movement. So Carol Flynn, by suppressing it, was getting friends for us, because they were feeling sorry! Like a mercy vote, legislators would think, 'I don't like her. If she's gonna do this, she might do something else.' Just to show her, they would vote for us, to vote against her.

The bill eventually got passed, unanimously in the Senate. **(See p. 320 for bill to protect the flow of Coldwater Spring.)** Julie Sabo carried it for us. She did a good job of bringing people together. Then here is another coincidence: our author in Senate for the first bill was Ellen Anderson and she was carrying a child. Our author in the Senate for this last bill was Julie Sabo and she was carrying a child! There's only been four women in the legislature that have had children during their tenure. Somehow we think that's very nice.

The people who lobbied felt very close to the land, to the spring, to the trees. Then when the trees were taken, and the camp was taken, I think, some of us went through a kind of depression, that lasted for weeks and weeks. Not only having been beaten so badly by the system, and feeling misrepresented, and having so much taken away from us, but then also, camp had been a meeting place. Fortunately Jimmy continued to do pipe ceremonies, but they really shortened the hours of the spring, so you had to go there from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday thru Friday, and with some people's work schedules this was very difficult. It's always closed on weekends, once in a while we'd get a special permit to go into the spring ... We could see things were breaking up, and people were going in their directions; they had done what they could and were moving on. Our sources of support were dissipating, and yet we knew that the fight was far from settled.

It's not over yet

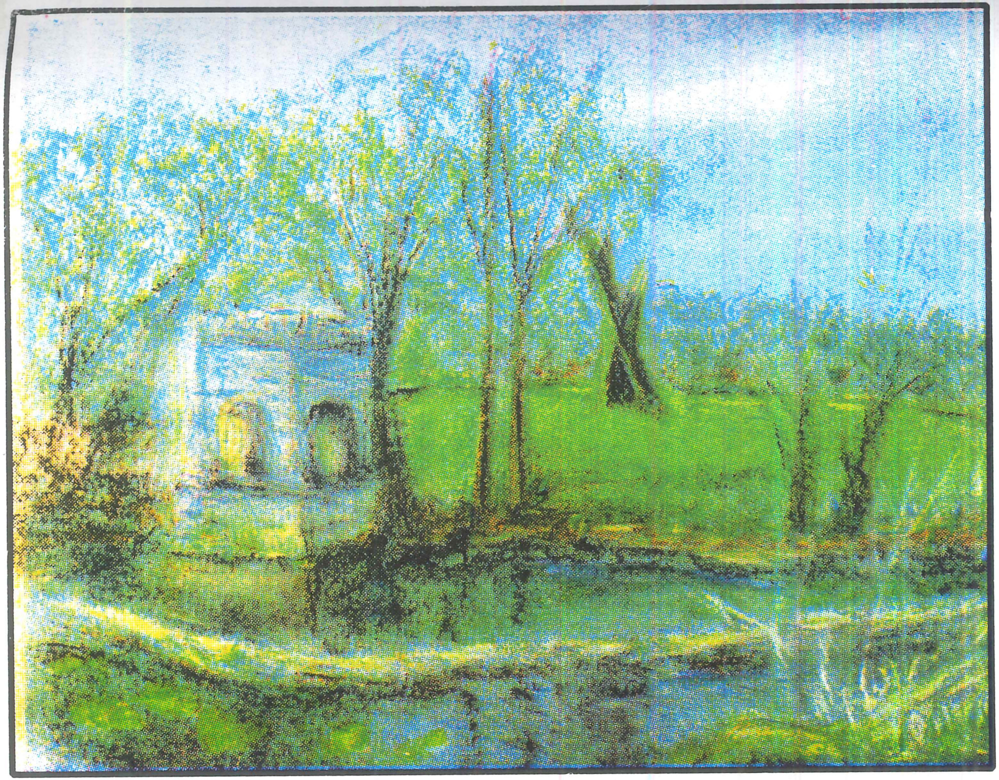
I don't think MNDoT thought our bill would be upheld. Then they went to the court system, and there's a case pending for them about the spring, and the new law is very clear, and the judge stopped them once to make them do the studies. Then MNDoT kind of said, "We're going back to the legislature and undo this law." They actually wrote a bill to repeal our bill. In fact this week is going to be very heavy because we've got a lot of people to touch base with, and it's a holiday week too. This year, MNDoT has a bill, to repeal our bill. They managed to get authors in both the House and the Senate, despite the fact that the Senate author was our supporter last year. He switched. MNDoT somehow convinced him. Maybe he has some pet project in his area, and MNDoT has said to him, "Well, if you want us to finish this, then maybe you better support this bill of ours." This is only one of the ways they go about things. We're just glad that MNDoT is doing a forward bill that just says, repeal the Coldwater Spring Bill. It's easier to fight it that way. We were worried that they might try to put something in an omnibus bill.

MNDoT are difficult people to deal with. They somehow think that they have some constitutional right to design roads the way they want to design them, and that we people should not be interfering with them. We kind of think they're overstepping their boundaries as far as what's judicial and what's legislative. I think legislators should be upset that MNDoT's trying to yank the judicial courts, saying, "Well, we don't like this law, we're going to change it." If I go to a judge and say, "I don't like you're law, I'm going to change it," he's going to throw the book at me! It's not only our group, but there are other groups that are concerned about MNDoT and the heavy-handedness of their method.

The reason that MNDoT is worried about this law is that it's precedent-setting legislation. It's like, "If they can get MNDoT to pay attention to the concerns of the community and the environment and the federal laws, then maybe people will start using that law, and citing it as a statute." We were told, Julie Sabo told us after it passed last year, that this was a very strong environmental law. A lot of people were happy. Some things did get knocked out. The Traditional Cultural Property did get knocked out. When it goes through committees there's always the chance it's gonna be changed and modified and some things will be stricken, but what we retained is pretty strong, stronger than most people expected.

Now, knowing that they want to double the size of 62, they want to add an extra lane in each direction, MNDoT has requested this ... I mean this struggle could go on for a few more years at least, on the legislative side. Now the land has been turned over to Fish and Wildlife, and they do have plans to open it up so that the public can come down there.

We're not so worried that they're going to destroy the land anymore, but we still want to make sure that we have a say and are able to do something. Even when you supposedly have the protections on the book, you still have to watchdog them, because in the case of a spring, if they do something wrong, how are they going to make that spring come back?



Recent monitoring of Coldwater Spring estimates that over 10,000 gallons of water flow through the spring daily.

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CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

The Coldwater Spring

After the ceremony at the Four Trees, Harry Charger told us that, "You're gonna lose those trees, but you're going to win." We didn't know what that meant, but what it meant is, we were gonna win the water. Their plan was to dynamite the bedrock in that area, and destroy the flow of that spring. Trees are very important, and those trees had special significance to us, but trees can be replanted, and that water source could never be fixed again.

-Jim Anderson

The following appeared in a yearly publication of the Minnesota Historical Society in 1956:

The discussions over the preservation of Fort Snelling revived interest in the site of Camp Coldwater, where Colonel Leavenworth and his troops camped temporarily in 1820 while the fort was under construction. The Coldwater area later served for decades as a waterworks, and a flowing spring, the remains of an old reservoir, and a stone tower may still be seen. At present the Minneapolis Department of Parks is considering the incorporation of Camp Coldwater into its system.

Thus as the year 1956 closes, it appears that old Fort Snelling will at last have a permanent and deserved place among Minnesota's adequately deserved historic spots. Hopes for the preservation of both the old fort and the Camp Coldwater sites seem brighter than they have in decades.

St. Paul Pioneer Press July 19th, 1997

Spring fever cool, clear water

For hydrogeologist Greg Brick, identifying and studying the springs of the Mississippi river bluffs is a passion.

By Don Boxmeyer, Staff Columnist

Greg Brick's search for spring water in the Twin Cities has been a solitary but refreshing pursuit. He has sloshed around in the water of Carver's Cave, located in St. Paul's "Diamond Necklace" and popped the famous manhole cover behind Montcalm Estates.

But nowhere does the subterranean spring water of the Twin Cities make a more dramatic entry to the outside world than adjacent an old U.S. Bureau of Mines experimental station near the Veterans' Affairs hospital in Minneapolis.

This would be Coldwater Spring, the still-abundant source of cool, clear water that was a godsend to the people who built nearby Fort Snelling in the 1820s. Those early soldiers and settlers went through a particularly bitter winter in 1819, when at least 40 soldiers had died of scurvy.

Brick, a hydrogeologist who has specialized in the springs of the Twin Cities, says the troops had been drinking river water until they found pure spring water rushing out of the Platteville limestone. The settlement became known as Camp Cold Water, and in 1819 the commandant of the fort moved his troops to this area to escape the unhealthy conditions of the Minnesota River. For many years after Camp Cold Water was vacated, the spring's water was hauled and piped to Fort Snelling.

Nothing is left of the camp today, except the spring, which still flows at 60 gallons per minute, and the reservoir built in the 1890s out of limestone rubble. The scenic little spring pond and its surviving architecture still give this historic but hidden spot a parklike setting.

Springs are gravity-fed streams of ground water often found near river bluffs. They were once important sources of pure drinking water - though many have become polluted today - and were critical to early settlement.

The Minneapolis side of the river has the bigger springs, such as Coldwater Spring, Bohemian Flats beneath the West Bank of the University of Minnesota and one pronounced Hi Duck near the Lake Street Bridge. But the river bluffs in St. Paul have more springs, Greg told me as we toured the river one day recently.

There was a legendary spring-charged lake in Carver's Cave, at the foot of Mounds Boulevard at Plum Street, but Greg says the water is now stagnant, has methane gas bubbling through it and shows no signs of movement, indicating the spring may have been interrupted by sewer construction, a common end to many historic urban springs.

The nearby town of Bloomington's Historical Society wrote a letter of support for preserving the Spring in 1998. The opening paraghaph is excerpted here:

The Bloomington Historical Society has discussed at length the potential impact on the site of Camp Coldwater as a result of the proposed highway construction project. We consider this site to be a most significant historic site that should be preserved and protected from the devastation that will occur if the highnway project occurs in that area. All efforts must be made to prevent the destructive impact on the site.

The following is testimony excerpted from the Traditional Cultural Property Assessment performed by MNDoT in 1999.

I have drunk from the sacred spring. I have felt the healing power of the sacred medicine. There is no life without water.

-Zac Mitteness, Ojibway

The Coldwater Spring is pure water which represents the spiritual life of the Dakota people. It is sacred, and the flow cannot be cut off. The water from the spring was used in our ceremonies because of its purity. Cutting off the flow of the water would be crushing the spirituality of our people, myself and my children, and our futures.

-La Rockzana Hop, Santee Sioux

The spring is a giver of life, and its source is near the center of the earth and a dwelling place for the gods.... My learning from both spiritual elders and historical works reveals that the area has a long history as a rendezvous point for many cultures - both Indigenous and European, who engaged in trade through the centuries. The confluence of the Minnesota and Mississippi Rivers makes the area a significant meeting place. The existence of a natural spring at Camp Coldwater is the central site for this historical rendezvous area.

-Jim Anderson, Mendota Mdewakanton Dakota

The Camp Coldwater Spring is a sacred spring. Its flow should not be stopped or disturbed. If the flow is disturbed, it cannot be restored. Also, if its source is disturbed, that disturbs the whole cycle of the flow. The spring is the dwelling place of the undergods and is near the center of the earth .... The spring is part of the cycle of life. The underground stream from the spring to the Mississippi River must remain open to allow the gods to enter the river through the passageway. The spring is the site of our creation myth or "Garden of Eden" and the beginning of Indian existence on Earth. Our underwater god Uncktehi lives in the spring. The sacredness of the Spring is evidenced by the fact that it never freezes over, and it is always possible to see activity under the surface of the water.

-Reverend Gary Cavender, Mdewakanton Dakota

I am certain that the Iowa tribe would have set up a village around Camp Coldwater because it has always been part of our tradition to set up villages around natural springs: Our spiritual tradition includes performing water ceremonies every day that require natural water from the ground. In our traditional villages people lived in longhouses similar to those used by the Mgonquin people. When our people died, they were buried underneath their houses ... I am convinced that there are burial remains belonging to the Iowa tribe throughout the vicinity of Camp Coldwater.

-Dick Black; Iowa tribe

At Camp Coldwater there is a spring which is sacred to the Indians. Water is the giver of life and makes things grow. The people in the old village used the spring water for medicine, ceremonies, washing and purification. They prayed to keep the water pure. Water which comes directly out of the ground is very pure. The water nurtured the Indians who lived in the village, it was sacred. They used the water in their sweat lodges.

-Chris Leith, Mdewakanton Dakota

Through our oral traditions, our history, recent and older, we know that the falls ... which came to be known as Minnehaha Falls, that there was a sacred place, was a neutral place for many nations to come, and that further geographically define the confluence of the three rivers, which is actually the two rivers, that point likewise was a neutral place. And that somewhere between that point and the falls, there were sacred grounds that were again mutually held to be a sacred place. And that the spring from which the sacred water should be drawn was not very far, and I've never heard any directions from which I could pinpoint, but there's a spring near the lodge that all nations use to draw the sacred water for the ceremonies.

-Eddie Benton Benais, Lac Courtes Oreilles, Ojibway

You know something, I didn't even know that this spring existed there until Earth First! and the Mendota Mdewakanton people came down here.... Never heard anything about this spring till we knew it was going to be under construction and they were going to destroy it. That's why we are here. Our elders told us that we have to protect this water. This is the lifeblood of Mother Earth. This is our medicine.

-Clyde Bellecourt, American Indian Movement

The following is a letter sent out to many people during the lobbying for the protection of the Coldwater Spring:

Aniin my name is Michael Olson, I am known as Thunder. I am Anishinabe. I would like to share a little of my experience of the Coldwater Spring area.

As a kid I grew up in the area of 54th and the river. I spent most of my time hanging out around the river, this was my playground. I came across the spring as a child and found this place very interesting.

The Bureau of Mines used this area for their testing. They kept this area fenced off and had a nice little recreation area for their employees near the spring. They built a holding pond to catch the water and stocked the pond with trout. As kids we used to sneak over the fence and swim in the pond, and would be chased out by security.

The Bureau of Mines used to dump barrels of toxic waste over the wall east of the spring. There were many barrels of toxic waste floating where the spring flows into a pond. I remember how the water was polluted, and was many different colors. In the late 70s with the environmental clean up going on, these barrels were removed and through time this area has cleaned itself up nicely.

A lot of people are unaware that the spring flows east and turns into a beautiful creek. If you follow this creek you will see where this next pond is. Then you come across the fence and the Fort Snelling bike trail. The creek flows under the bike trail continuing east about a block. Here the creek turns into a water fall. We called this Hidden Falls. This falls ends and empties into the polluted Mississippi river.

I have heard many estimates of how much water the spring actually generates and have seen many, from different organizations measuring the flow, to include the DNR. What ever this amount is I know its a large amount of fresh water, and this fresh water flows directly into the polluted Mississippi river. The destruction of this flow of fresh water into the polluted river would be a disaster.

MNDoT claims they can build a road and not affect the flow of this spring. MNDoT has no idea what further damage will occur if the spring is destroyed. Even if the spring is not destroyed, what about the pollution from the construction of the roadway, the eventual traffic and runoff. These things will surely have a damaging effect on the spring. I am sure they have never looked past the spring's origin. Except where the river bluff area has already been staked out for drainage. Right into the river. Any organization concerned or dedicated to preserving or reversing the effects of the damage already done to the Mississippi river should be concerned with the destruction of this spring or even the slightest possibility of it.

We need this spring for many different reasons. In 1998 the Mendota Dakota people were reintroduced to this area and the spring. Through their investigations and study of this area they found this spring and surrounding area to be of great significance to their past and present. I along with many others have taken part in ceremonies and gatherings at this spring. This is a sacred site to myself and many others. Through the white man's history, along with many oral teachings of Indian people, we know that this has always been a gathering place, because of the medicine waters that flow here.

I know it's not too late to save this spring for all that it's worth. Stop MNDoT from ever destroying or even getting near this spring. They have a history of destroying things they say they will not. This area should be returned to the Mendota Dakota for safekeeping forever.

-Your friend and keeper of the water, Thunder

Craig Larson

My name is Craig Larson. I'm a professional geologist working in the field of groundwater geology. I have lived in Minneapolis nearly my entire life. Right now I'm fortunate enough to live less than one half mile from Minnehaha Park.

Minnehaha Park has always been important to our family. It was a place where we could ride our bicycles to or have a family picnic. I grew up before most families had air conditioning, so Minnehaha Park was a place where we could go on very hot days to cool off in the creek and my parents could let us kids just run around.

In the eighth grade I was a student at Northeast Junior High School where I took my first geology field trip to Minnehaha Park. At that time I had no extraordinary interest in geology, but we had a very good teacher who took us to the park to show us what geology was. Seeing the bedrock exposures at the park made the geology real and sparked our interest much more than a tray full of minerals, which is most students' introduction to geology. The educational opportunities of the park, and areas like Coldwater Spring, are really phenomenal. There's a wealth of resources there available for our kids to learn about how our natural systems work. Coldwater Spring, of course, is a groundwater fed spring, so you see how groundwater and surface water interact and, you can teach children about how what they do can potentially impact water resources.

The reason I got involved in the Highway 55 reroute was because of the resources of Minnehaha Park, Coldwater Spring, and the Mississippi River Gorge, all areas that I've been active in preserving. These are truly rare urban resources and worthy of our protection. Coldwater Spring is probably one of the largest springs in Minnesota, definitely in the metro area. A lot of times people from outside of the Minneapolis area think 'Oh it's too close to the airport,' or, 'That's in Minneapolis, how can they have that?,' but if you go to these parks, they're just beautiful.

Inadequate Information

As a groundwater geologist I became interested in the environmental assessments, which were prepared to protect the resources. The only groundwater assessment that I could find for Coldwater Spring was a memorandum prepared by the State using the Hennepin County Hydrogeologic Atlas. The Atlas looks at the geology of the entire county, on a very large scale, and doesn't look at small features. The intent of the Atlas is not to do a site-specific assessment. It's really just what you look at first, and then you do an assessment in addition to that based on site-specific data. The memorandum concluded that the groundwater recharge to the spring extended back to Lake Minnetonka, over 10 miles away. However, a simple comparison of the average flow of the spring to the estimated groundwater recharge of the area - which is very easy to do - shows that the recharge area is actually within a mile of the spring, and so actions taken within that area have a much greater effect, proportionately, than the groundwater assessment suggests.

If you look at the Environmental Impact Statement, or EIS, for the rerouting of Highway 55 there is no mention of Coldwater Spring in that document whatsoever. It's impossible for me to believe that all the people who reviewed that, including the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, the Minnesota Historical Society, and the City of Minneapolis, that nobody knew about this resource. Perhaps they preferred not to ask the question for fear of what the answer may be.

The other thing to consider is that you put many chemicals on highways, notably salt. So there are issues of not only groundwater quantity, but also groundwater quality. The road was being moved very close to the Minnehaha Glen where there is what the Park Board calls a "black ash seep." This beautiful wetland is fed by groundwater. These wetlands are relatively rare, especially in an urban environment. You get marsh marigolds and skunk cabbage, and you don't see a lot of cattails like you do in man made wetlands where there is a lot of water fluctuation. Since the road was being moved closer to this resource, there is a potential that road salts could be introduced which would not be compatible with the native plant species which evolved here. This is another consequence of the road that went overlooked.

Thanks to the Minnehaha Watershed District

I went to the State Capitol and spoke to our political leaders, many of whom I supported. I've been a financial contributor to the DFL party and these people had nothing to say to me.

It was apparent to me that they were more concerned about the interests of the labor unions, who were far larger contributors to their party. In fact when I talked to them, they all gave me the same answer. They were prepared. I found the Republicans much more apt to listen to my concerns since they didn't have the financial conflict the DFL did. However, in all fairness there was a minority of members in the DFL party who were very sympathetic to our concerns.

The citizens had no success getting the environmental message out until they lobbied the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District. Because of this lobbying, the Watershed District hired an independent geologist, Kelton Barr, who is one of the most respected hydrogeologists in the state. Once he started to collect site-specific data it became clear that the groundwater wasn't adequately assessed. The people of Minnesota owe a lot to the Watershed District since they really put their butts on the line. They were under a lot of pressure not to do what they did, and if they hadn't, the road construction may have stopped the flow to Coldwater Spring.

In fact, the political leadership tried to stop the Watershed District with a bill written by then Speaker of the Senate, Roger Moe, and our representative from the district, Carol Flynn. They authored a bill that said that the political body that appointed the Watershed District could override their decision, and that any decision made by an appointed board could be overridden by the political body that appointed that board. They didn't even limit it to the Watershed District. The head of the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, the Department of Natural Resources, the heads of all these agencies are appointed. Moe and Flynn were ready to throw out all environmental laws to make sure this project went through, and were willing to stifle the voices of the community. The bill didn't pass; it was so far reaching and insane even the Republicans wouldn't vote for it, but what they were doing was showing the big fist of the DFL. So there was a lot of pressure put on the Watershed District.

Eventually, because of Kenton Barr's assessment through the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District, we were able to get legislation passed to protect the spring. The state said they wouldn't impact the spring whether the bill passed or not, thinking there was no chance that it would pass, but through the diligence of the Camp Coldwater Coalition, visiting every State Representative and Senator, it passed in an almost unanimous vote. There are some good politicians out there who deserve mention like Mark Gleason, Julie Sabo, Karen Clark, who all worked with us on the bill. Because of this bill it was necessary to do a complete redesign of the road to protect the flow.

"Finally, I think I would like to end this with a story."

My wife and I were very active and very wound up in this issue. When I woke up and went to bed I was thinking about the reroute. Also we were working with the Native Americans a lot and one day this Native American boy shows up in our yard. He was nine years old, his chain was broken on his bicycle and he was obviously scared since it was dusk. His parents didn't have a phone and he got separated from his friends at the park. So we fixed his bike and my wife gave him some cookies and we got him on his way. I didn't feel comfortable calling the police, and I didn't feel comfortable transporting him since he's obviously a minor. So we did everything we could to get him on his way safely. I still worry about if the bicycle chain held.

When I got back in the house, I thought about this. We don't see many Native Americans in our neighborhood, (except for in the park). Then while working with the Native Americans on the reroute sometimes an eagle would fly overhead when you don't usually see eagles, and you start thinking, 'Well, this is kinda weird.' I'm Unitarian, so I don't tend to be real otherworldly. But when I thought about this little boy who appeared in our backyard and we were able to help in some small way, he seemed like he was sent to say "See, your efforts do help, they do matter, you're doing the right thing."

The legislation that was passed as a result of the lobbying efforts of citizens did require MNDoT to make changes in their planned construction. One such change was that MNDoT was not allowed to excavate as deeply as they had planned, as such digging was deemed a threat to the well-being of the spring. The bill reads as follows:

CHAPTER 101-S.F. No. 2049
An act relating to historic preservation; recognizing and extending the protection of the Minnesota Historic Sites Act and the Minnesota Field Archaeology Act to historic Camp Coldwater Springs; amending Minnesota Statutes 2000, section 138.73, subdivision 13.

Section 1. **PROTECTION OF NATURAL FLOW.**

Neither the State, nor a unit of metropolitan government, nor a political subdivision of the State may take any action that may diminish the flow of water to or from Camp Coldwater Springs. All projects must be reviewed under the Minnesota Historic Sites Act and the Minnesota Field Archaeology Act with regard to the flow of water to or from Camp Coldwater Springs.

SPRINGS OF THE PAST

Loring Spring in Loring Park Lake was killed in the 80's by Highway 94 construction.

Powderhorn Spring in Powderhorn Lake was killed in the 80's by Highway 35 construction.

Glenwood / Big Medicine Spring in Theodore Wirth Park was killed in the 90's by Highway 394 construction.

Cottonwood

By Nettle

Puzzled Judge
questioning our motives
asks why we bother to protect you.
They grow like weeds, he proclaims.
Yet in my eyes you were
an ancient.
Your heart shaped leaves
flittering in the wind
turning and drooping
as you watched your young
cut down one by one.
And for every death, new life
appeared as a person
standing beneath you
waving from the bridge
In mutual honor.
We adored you
and your wisdom showered us
falling like rain
from heart shaped leaves
your gentle voice reassuring,
It will appear that I am gone
We will meet again.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

The Siege of the Cottonwood and other stories

Finally we all decided, "Okay, this time we're going to be there first. We got to do it, we don't have any choice." Because that was the threshold, the Cottonwood was like the last stand.

-Squash

The Cottonwood Tree had been occupied for several months by this time. There was a road construction sign where 46th Street met Highway 55, informing the public that Highway 55 would be closed beginning Monday, October 26th. The workers did come to close the road, but the Minnehaha Free Staters had already done it for them.

Marshall Lough, Freedom, Squash and Rory

Marshall: That night the tripod went up in the road I remember someone pulling me aside, maybe midnight or 11:30, and asking, "Um, are you willing to drive this truck?" I said, "Okay, what are we doing." They're like, "Don't worry, just drive the truck." I'm like, "Great." So all of a sudden, you know, they were lashing these tripod poles together and I say, "Okay, now where's it going?" They're like, "Oh, in the middle of the road." I'm like "In the middle of the road? How are going make sure we get traffic stopped so nobody gets killed?" "Don't worry, it's going to work. You're going to stop and then we're going to put it out right in front of you. You know, and it will just be perfect."

I remember, first of all, we didn't even have it tied down; we were holding it on either side as we were driving down the street. I kept thinking the neighbors were like "Here they go again," you know. Like, "Honey, should we call the tipline or not?" Just getting there, and all of a sudden so many people were taking it off the truck. "How do we get this up?" and they were trying to, but it kept being kinda sideways. Grant was trying to get up in it but the legs weren't up yet.

So I got out of the truck, and thought the parking brake worked. So finally we get the tripod up, but the truck's starting to come towards the tripod. These cars are zooming by really fast. I have to run get in and put the brake on the truck! I'm just going, "Shit shit shit." Then sure enough, the tripod's up. There it is. Right in the middle of the road. It was kinda crooked.

I also remember driving out, getting the truck parked, and running back and being liked "Whoo-hooo!." I've heard stories from people who were in the trees, who at first didn't know what the hell was going on. There was just all this clanging and shit happening. People tell me it's funny.

Freedom: It was funny. Rory and I were sitting in the Cottonwood, we'd been there for about a week. We were sleeping, it was four in the morning or something, really early. I just have this vague memory of flashy kind of lights behind my eyelids, and hearing stuff, hearing a vehicle stop. Being like, "Fuck," you know, "Here they are. The cops are here at four in the morning to get us out of this tree, what?!"

We're in this net that has eight foot sides. So I get up, and I crawl outside of the tarp, and look down, and there's these poles. I'm like "Okay, ladder? What is this?" There's poles, and they come up into a tripod! Then suddenly this huge rush of excited realization ... "Rory, Rory, they're putting up a tripod!" We still had no idea who it was, but this incredible feeling of someone having your back ... We were there, in our tree, knowing we had a huge support network out there, but also pretty much alone, when out of the darkness comes our comrades, our warriors, to stand by our side. Out of moments like that grew this trust and dependability that I feel to this day ...

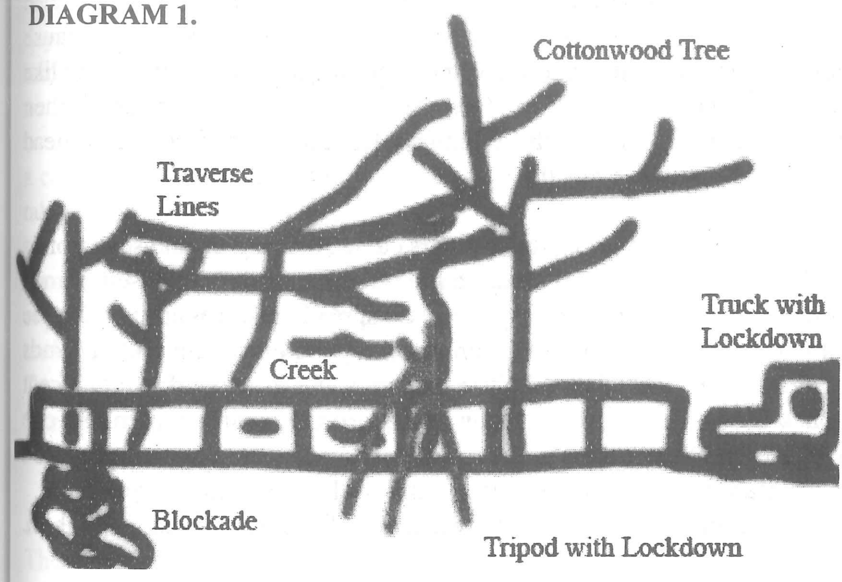
So with traffic stopped and no threat in sight, Rory and I came down out of the tree. This little machine came down the road, painting lines for some reason, and we decided to stop it. One by one we stood in front of it, and when the cop told us to move or we would be arrested, that person would hand it off to the next. The line painting machine driver got fed up and left. We had taken the bridge!

Someone drew in huge chalk letters, "THE ROAD ENDS HERE." For that long day, it did. It may be hard for the bystander to understand, but the empowerment we had that day is not diminished by the existing circumstance of a road. When I think about that day, the feelings of unity, strength, trust and others still echo in me, with no "buts" about it.

Myself and Rory had been having conversations recently, and had concluded that people often don't take spontaneous action because they are afraid that no one will have their back, and thus more trust, bravery, and back-having was needed in the world in general. With this in mind, we walked up and stood in front of one of many semi trucks that were hauling dirt out of the cleared area, right past the Cottonwood **[See diagram 1.]**. We had no tools and no plan, just 30 or 40 of our comrades milling about. Then here comes a woman and locks herself to the bumper, and here comes a man and puts wood behind the tires as the truck started to roll backward, and so on. We were ecstatic, and continue to try and harbor trust and solidarity of the like to this day. I will never forget that day.

Marshall: [Later that day…] The guy who was like the engineer for the entire project was out there. He comes walking out with a state trooper and he's like "Okay, now, we want to know if you guys are going to leave the road or not?" We're all sitting there and we're like, "Well, I mean, we're a consensus based group so give us a little time." So everyone huddles up by the tripod. Someone has a cell phone and they call up Jimmy and [ask], "Okay you know we're out in the road what should we do?" Jim Anderson

DIAGRAM 1.



is like "Well, uh, we are there to stop the road, right?" We're like "Well, I guess that's a yes." Everyone in the circle was sort of asking each other, too. There was total discussion, there was total concensus on it.

So then the head engineer comes back and he's like "Are you going to leave," and we're like "No." He's like "Okay." Then people started bringing big chunks of concrete and that kinda stuff out in the middle of the road. At that point Kittridge and company starts zooming in and I just started thinking, 'Ooohhh shit. Whatever's going to happen is going to happen.' So, at that point they came up and they said, "You have five minutes to clear the road." Like four or five people sat down around Liz. Everyone else pretty much stepped over the wall [that had been built]. The crowd started growing; it was this bigger and bigger crowd.

About four o' clock they came in, and just how funny and strange we must have seemed to them, is something I always think about. Not just the cops, but the other people in general, the general society. Because the cops were coming up, asking, "Are you going to move?" "No." They took Frybread "Are you going to move," they took Claire. I was sitting there, they come up to me. I'm just sitting there and they're like "Are you going to move?" I'm like "We made a consensus decision to not move, what do you think?" And he's just like "What, is that a yes or a no?" I'm like, "We made a consensus decision ..." and at that point they just grabbed me and started taking me.

To me, that was one of the best days for a long time. Just because they had been doing that guerilla war tree cutting for so long. It just felt like we were just running back and forth trying to stop one tree after another. It was kind of satisfying to be able to confront them on their actions head on, instead of always reacting.

Freedom: Late afternoon, the troopers came zooming in, and seven of us headed for the tree. After evicting the other lockdowns they sent a man with a chainsaw up in a cherry picker. We spread ourselves around the tree with our magic: as long as we were touching a branch with feet or hands it would not be cut. After a while they took the machine down and sent it back up with a cop with a baton, in addition to chainsaw man. At one point I went to meet them and the cop pointed his baton at me. I reached out to grab it, touched it and he pulled it back. He seemed scared.

After Rory got arrested I was feeling like I wanted to go with him.

I saw an opportunity to fight the machines. I took a rope over to above the cherrypicker. I tied the rope off and attached my harness to it, with a rappelling eight and a prussic for my two points of safety. I didn't have any extra prussics handy; two extra is standard, but it didn't seem like I had time to find them.

I threw the rope down and lowered myself towards the armof the cherrypicker. I got to it and was beginning to circle it, with rope in tow, in order to tie it up per se, when I felt suddenly stuck. I hadn't watched where my rope went when I threw it down, and it was within reach of a cop! So frustrating. Toxic saw me stuck there and I yelled for a prussic so I could get back up the rope. He dropped me one and it fell literally through my fingers. I couldn't believe what a good shot it was, and that I had not caught it. The cop on the ground held me in place while they brought the fire ladder around to pick me off and arrest me.

A note on freeclimbing

With all due respect and prayers for those who have lost people to falls, if you can freeclimb, and you are safe within that knowledge and the parameters of your own abilities, it can be a very strong tactic. In the Cottonwood, they couldn't just take us down. We were mobile and could take action faster, and the chainsaw man and others had to be careful because there were 200 people watching. Two of us that got arrested that day did so of our own volition, through counteractive moves against the unrelenting machines. We went down fighting when we felt it was right, not for a bragging right, but as a freedom.

On the other hand, the people driving machines were careless a couple times that day, and somebody could've died. We were simply taken care of, is all we could figure.

Squash: I had left during the day to go back to camp, to grab some more supplies and what not. I got back to camp and got an arm load of ropes and food and water. I was on my way back, and right as I left the kitchen, Tree comes running across from the south gate with the radio in her hand. She screaming, "They're coming for the tree, they're coming for the tree!" I looked at John next to me; he was like "Let's go, let's go."

We jumped in his truck and hauled ass up there and jumped out. I come up, and I see this fire truck coming up, and there's a police line. They pushed everybody about 40 feet back from the bridge. You know there's probably, what, 15 or 20 cops there, and a few state troopers.

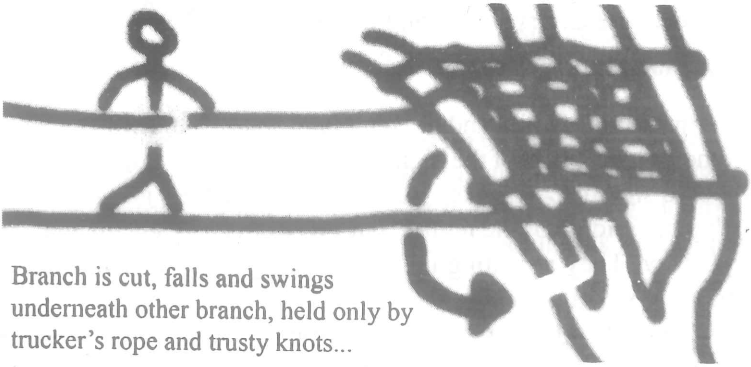
I walked over by the tree that the traverse line went to. Right as all these cops turned their back I got tossed up in the tree by John. I just ran up there with my harness and got on the traverse line. I'm getting on there, I had ropes and stuff, but I was like, "Okay, I'm not going to safety, I'm just going to go out there, it will make them less likely to try and grab me." I jumped on the traverse line, I'm like five feet across looking down, and I look up, because the line's going back and forth all of a sudden. I look up, and here's Midnight coming across the line with this terrified look on his face. I look over, and the fire ladder is right there, and they're cutting the net out. Midnight came to me and then we had to do this funky change around. I had to let him get past me so he could sit on the tree branch and I got out on the traverse line and started going towards the firemen. I was half way to the middle of the traverse line, and I was directly over this big, like, 15 foot wide, concrete retaining wall thing that was there in the creek. All of a sudden I look over and the fireman's got his knife up to the line. I start screaming and yelling, "No, no, I am going to die!"

So I'm going back and forth, and at one point, I went completely flat out on my back, stretched horizontal between the two traverse lines. I was screaming, "Midnight! Get off the traverse line." He got off the line and I flipped back up and almost went off the other side. Then the cops started retreating and going for somebody on the lowest big branch. That's when I booked it across and told Midnight to start getting on the line again. I just remember they kept going back and forth between me and Midnight for a minute there.

I had a perfect view of what happened to Midnight. **[See diagram 2.]** He was standing on one traverse and had a safety on the top one. They cut through the branch that the top traverse was connected to, and the top branch came down with him, connected by his safety traverse line. [Luckily, and surely by no forethought of the man with the chainsaw, the branch that he cut also had the huge cargo net tied to it, and that net was also tied to another branch in the middle and another on the far end.] So the branch swung up; at first I thought it was gonna hit Midnight. Then I thought was that the rope was gonna snap and Midnight was gonna go flying and ... not make it. The rope was like 1,000 pound test weight, and that branch was more than 1,000 pounds.

Seeing him, he didn't scream, except to say, "Stop it! Stop it! Shame on you! Bad Cop! No donut!" Over and over. He kept saying the bad cop no donut thing. It was great. He was totally a trooper through that. I definitely would've been flipping my wig a bit more if I was in the same situation. He just bounced, and went up above the line and bounced back below it, and just grabbed it, got on it, loosened his safety and went over and got back in the tree, and was totally calm. I don't know how he did it.

DIAGRAM 2.



Branch is cut, falls and swings underneath other branch, held only by trucker's rope and trusty knots...

Then it got crazy. That part was a blur; I remember we were all sitting in that low web there. We were like, "Okay, what are we going to do? They're going to be coming for us soon, and what are we going to do?" Everyone's like, "All right, let's just spread out, we've got food, we've got water. You know, just keep them from getting up here." Then Methane leaned over to me and said "Do you have a knife on you?," and I was like "Well yeah, why?" He was like, "Give me your knife." "OK," handed him my knife. He's like "Okay guys I'll be back." He starts climbing to the top of the tree.

By this time, I think, they'd started coming with the guy with the chainsaw. Started lopping branches off with this guy in the cherrypicker. He had that funny twitch the whole time too, I don't know what his problem was. Methane climbed up on a branch and walked like 15 feet out from the edge of the tree. With no safety on or anything, not even a harness, and he just walks out. I see the knife in his hand. Keeps walking out, and then I hear him holler, “For every branch you cut off of this tree, I’m going to cut myself!” Everyone’s just “Aghhhh, no, Methane!” Then sure enough chainsaw fires up and you see him. The worst part was it was a pretty blunt knife. So Methane was going like “aughhh, aughhh” over and over on his chest. I think when he realized that wasn’t going to do much good he just took a running start and leapt. He was probably what, 35, 40 feet off the ground. He jumped out, right onto the cherrypicker and then they put it straight up in the air and were trying to shake him off. [Then they lowered the cherrypicker, and the cops were like, “Throw down the knife!” He did, and they arrested him.]

Rory: I’m sleepin’ all nice and peaceful like, in the Cottonwood Tree, when out of the drone and din of the highway comes the sound of metal clanging and people shoutin’. I’m like “Aww damn, why they gotta come for us now! It’s the middle of the night!” but Freedom’s already up and yelling, “Rory! Rory! They’re setting up a tripod!” And that was all I needed to hear to get my butt in gear.

They then got the tripod up and Grant got up in it, Lavender locked down to one of the legs. I remember sitting in a branch above Grant sometime around dawn when the idea came to me that perhaps when the cops came Grant might wanna, well, escape. So I tied this short climb line right over him ‘cause this branch I was on went right over the road.

When the cops did finally come about seven of us got up into the tree before they actually got to the bridge. When they were clearing people from the bridge I climbed over to the branch right above the road. I tied another line of trucker’s rope right next to the climb line there to pass notes or water or whatever to Grant while the cops tried to get him out ‘cause the other climb line was to short to tie stuff to.

[When the branch that Midnight’s rope was attached to was cut], I remember looking at Midnight thinkin’ that that net won’t hold for long and he just hung there on that line with this total look of fear and helplessness. I ran up this branch that went over him that I’d never had dared to free climb before ‘cause it was so steep but that day it was like we all had wings or some thing ‘cause I just up and ran straight up that thing, and threw him a line and tied it to the branch so that’s how he got off the line.

At that point I remember me, Freedom and Methane had been playing cat and mouse with this chainsaw guy in the cherry picker. Just totally not safetied in to anything. When I think about it now I think "that was pure insanity." I remember just running on these branches back and forth, making monkey like leaps all around the tree trying to keep up with the chainsaw dude.

The scene was total apocalypse, like the end days or something. All our opposition and resistance to all this progress and all the resistance anyone had ever given to the process of civilization was all right there. It was like Crazy Horse when he said we all live in the shadows of the real world, the spirit world. I could barely wrap my head around the idea then that if we are all in the shadow of the spirit world, what was really going on here? I remember almost picturing all these techno-roman solders pillaging some sacred druid site and us preparing to do battle to save it. Just a total sense in my heart that what was going on just then was a lot bigger than us, and my head wasn't big enough to fit in the REAL big picture then. All the fucked up history coming down to this point, this tree, right now. It was a very defining moment for me.

Another someone's going to die moment

By the time Methane was wrestling with the cherry picker they had also brought a fire truck with a fire ladder on it. And these two fire men were coming up and trying to cut all our little nets and lines we had all over the tree. It was a huge tree too. Then looking down at this fire truck ladder swinging all over and cutting all our lines and supplies and stuff I yelled to Freedom to throw me her u-lock 'cause mine had dropped when I went and got Midnight. I was racking my brain about how we could stop this ladder … this ladder ... a ladder has rungs and I got a u-lock! Bingo! The ladder was then coming up again over the bridge and I ran up to the branch where I had tied those lines. The ladder stopped like ten feet down and 25 feet out from where I was while they were cutting some supplies off.

This all was happening fast so I quick threw my eight [a rappelling device] on the line, hauled up the end of the rope and at the bottom put on my prussics with the idea that I would zip down the line when the ladder got close, lock it up or something then snap on the prussics and scurry back up into the tree.

Well the ladder came around alright so I jumped out, zipped down and got my feet on the ladder, but I was at the end of the rope which was like 25 feet above the street, and they started to lower the ladder as soon as they saw me get a foothold so I quick pulled out the u-lock and looked down at the ladder and it was moving. (The ladder had like three concentric squares to it so it could telescope real far and still retract and fit on the truck.) Then I saw all these cops pointing at me from the ground all yellin', some were scrambling up the truck so I quick got out the u-lock and then realized that I couldn't reach the ladder with out disconnecting my eight so I disconnected and got the u-lock around a rung and managed to catch one of the inner retracting rungs too and locked it up.

Well it stopped retracting and the firefighters who were in the bucket were all like "What the Hell??" 'cause they were stuck up there. Then three of the cops started to climb out onto the ladder towards me so I quick yelled " Hey! You want this key?" which I had up in the air, waving it around and when they all saw what I had, I chucked it into the creek. Then they started to lower the ladder on me and my line was getting farther and farther away from me so I quick decided to try and grab the rope and attach one of the prussics I had left there at the bottom to my harness, seemed like a better idea than getting arrested but the rope was barely in reach and these cops were coming up the ladder again when they figured out what I was trying to do so I just leaped out a bit up towards the rope and grabbed it with both hands right at the bottom around the stopper knot.

Then the world really slowed down and got eerily silent. I remember just swinging there over the road, I sorta could hear Elli and all the others yelling, I realized then that I couldn't manage to hang by one hand and snap the prussic in that was rubbing me right in my face. I couldn't reach the ladder with my feet anymore 'cause they were moving it away. I noticed under me all these troopers kinda milling around right under me like a dozen or so of them. Then I felt this tug on my leg. It was like a hand around my ankle pulling me down real hard. I found out later that the cops had managed to get a hold of the trucker's rope I had tied on the branch earlier. They swung that rope around my foot a few times and pulled on it. I then remember feeling my grip loosen and whoosh I was falling. Falling like in a dream almost. I looked up for a second and caught a glimpse of Freedom's face looking at me as I fell. That look still haunts me today, that look of complete fear and horror like I've never seen before or since. I then remember looking down just in time to see the cops under me all make way for me to fall right in the middle of them and that

I did. BAM! Right on the pavement. Complete darkness, but only for a second. Am I dead?

I thought I was for a second then I realized I couldn't move my legs or arms at all and my head was reeling. I opened my eyes looked up and saw Freedom right above me in the tree just yelling and crying and cursing up and down like she was about to just take on the whole world. Then this cop's head is in my face and sez "You ain't seein' the medic till you tell us your name" and I couldn't believe that shit and I think I mumbled some obscenities at him but eventually they loaded me onto a stretcher and handcuffed me to it and lead me off and on they way to the ambulance I heard Methane yell "Hey Rory!" I turned my head and saw him up against a squad car trying to convince this cop to let him see if I was alright, he came over and all he said was "I've always wanted to Sundance, how 'bout you brother?" All I could manage was a meekish "yeah."

* * *

I found out later that the Dakota use the Cottonwood Tree as the tree of life in the Sundance ceremony and men pierce themselves and tie up with the tree then later run backward real fast and some jump up and break their piercing like that and fall back on the earth and in that way, the elders say, the people are helped and healed. Every time I see that at a Sundance, all I can think about is that day at the Cottonwood. I'll end with saying that the only reason I didn't even break a bone on that day was all those people praying while we were up there in that tree. That day, whether all us EF!ers knew it or not, was like our first Sundance.

Squash: Then [those of us that were left] slept in the little volleyball netting. It was a one person sit, really, but you could fit two if you liked each other. All four of us slept in it. We were sure it was gonna break; "It's gonna break and we're all gonna be hanging by our safeties in the morning, asleep." It didn't. It was freezing cold that night. We all woke up just astounded that we had made it through the night without falling out. We were all hanging over the edges of the net, and there were big rip holes in it. We tried to wrap ourselves in blankets, but there were only six blankets. It was not enough.

Marshall: Definitely not Ruckus Society approved.

Squash: It was really fun the next day; me and Toxic decided to go down and salvage what was left of the big net that they cut, the lower web. We spent about an hour and a half recovering every last bit of rope, everything we could. The cops just stood there the whole time dumbfounded, like, "No, we cut that up, you're not supposed to take it apart." One of them I actually remember saying, "Leave that alone!" We just kept going, and ended up taking the remnants and putting up another web next to that small one, that was big enough for all of us to comfortably sleep in. The cops were so pissed off when we peered over the branch that it was anchored to, in our fresh new web of leftovers. I think it made them realize, "Next time, we cut it all down. Take everything next time."

Four people remained in the Cottonwood Tree for a few days, after which they decided to send three down to conserve resources. Nettle remained in the tree for a total of 11 days, alone only in that she sat 60 feet above her friends and supporters, who maintained 24 hour vigil from the street below.

Roadside

Written by Nettle in the Cottonwood Tree

IT'S ALL ROADSIDE NOW
THERE WERE TREES THEY ARE GONE
I FOUND RELIEF IN THEIR SHADE
NOW THE SUN BEATS ON CONCRETE
TRAFFIC SELDOM STOPS
I LONG FOR-GOTTEN DAYS
LIVE ON IN MY MEMORY
IT'S HARD TO BREATH IN SMOG
THAT'S WHERE ALL THIS PROGRESS LEADS
I WANT TO DESTROY THEIR MACHINES
BUT THE FEAR OF JAIL
KEEPS ME CLEAN
I WANT TO TEAR DOWN THE CELLS
WHERE MY FRIENDS ARE HELD
WITHOUT BAIL
I WISH THESE COPS WOULD DISAPPEAR
BEHIND NEWSPAPERS THEY SNEER

HOW DID THIS WORLD GET SO FUCKED?
I WISH MY MIND I COULD MAKE UP
DO I WANT TO GIVE BIRTH?
I WANT TO GO TO THE HILLS WHERE NATURE EXISTS STILL
BUT I'M FIGHTING IN THIS SPOILED CITY
BECAUSE ITS POWER HAS TO END!!

Greg Strandmark

The circumstances of that arrest: that was when most of the trees were down up by the big Cottonwood; Nettle was still up in the tree. The equipment kept coming up and bumping the tree. The police officers that were sitting under it and watching that day, so- called protecting us, were hollering up at Nettle, "Here it comes again!" [They were] taking active part, in my mind, in taking the tree down. I took it upon myself to get some badge numbers, because if the tree came down, I wanted anyone who was there to be held responsible. As far as I know, I can ask for a badge number. However there was a police line, so I had to first have permission to cross it.

Me [and two others] went to the line and asked one of the police officers sitting in the car if we could approach and talk to him. He didn't say yeah or no, so we crossed and talked to him. He didn't have a problem talking to us, and we got his badge number and his partner's badge number no problem. We walk to the car behind. His first words were, "Get across the police line." I said, "All I want is a badge number, and I will get across the police line." He was dead set against that. So I kinda leaned forward, so I could at least look.

At that point in time, Midnight came up on my right side. The cop reached through his window and grabbed him, over my shoulder. I backed and ducked away, across the police line. All I could think about was grabbing Midnight's jacket and pulling him with me. Next thing I know I got the biggest cop I ever seen throwing me around, getting me on the ground. I'm freezing up tight so he can't really put me in handcuffs. He's telling me to relax but I'm not really giving in. Then there goes the mace into my eye, at which point I said, OK, I can't really fight it, I got a bad back, I got some bad hips, I really can't be fighting the police. I know that.

So a common technique when a policeman has you down is one sits on your head, and one sits on your feet. Well three days later I had a big red spot show up on my ankle. My foot started getting sore for the next couple weeks. [I thought] 'That feels kind of like a blood clot,' but I didn't know anything about it, really. Then I got a pain in my calf, and that's the clot that actually moved up into my lung, and put me down for the longest time. To this day I still have problems with it. I owe close to $6000 worth of medical bills, and I can't find a job because of [my blood clot]...

Teatree

I felt really attached to the Cottonwood Tree. I spent a lot of time in it before the authorities decided to remove it. The morning the cops showed up to enforce its removal, I felt like I should've been in the tree to defend it, but so many people were already there that I left it to them.

A few days later when most of the people who had occupied the tree were down and only Nettle was still defending it I was hit by a car about a half a block away. It was not an act of aggression against a protestor. The woman who was driving felt really bad and came to see me in the hospital. Nettle came down and the Cottonwood Tree was cut down while I was in the hospital.

I had head trips then and continue to now about my attachment to the tree and how I was injured while the Cottonwood was still standing, threatened and with many of its limbs removed. A lot of me can't accept or believe that I just happened to be hit by a car. For a long time I felt like it was in connection to what was happening to the Cottonwood and that area. The weird thing that's going on in my head right now is this feeling that I wasn't pure enough in my struggle to save the area and maybe this is punishment for not fighting from a pure enough place. I can think that its not right for me to believe this, but I still feel this way. It's something that I can't get over.

Cricket

This is the story about Teatree's accident, which occurred during the week of the Cottonwood stand off. I think it was Friday night of that week. It was toward the end of things and everyone was completely strung out from lack of sleep 'cause we were maintaining vigil at the

Cottonwood, 24 hours, plus trying to keep camp going and everything else. All our outside support, like people coming from out of town, was starting to dwindle.

Teatree and Little Bear were doing the com car thing; they were sitting in Marigold's car that has radios and all that stuff. They had probably been there a really long time and they were very, very tired and wanted to sleep. I went to talk to them, and they asked if I could take one of their places and I said no, because I was about to die from lack of sleep. But they probably were too. Anyway, I promised them I would try to find somebody to replace them, or whatever, if I could. Then I got on my bike and rode off.

They were parked around the corner from where the Cottonwood was, whatever that street was, 42nd Avenue, I think. I was over by the Ash when I heard a sound kinda like SLAP [hits table]… this wet slap, like someone dropping a hundred pound sack of flour onto the pavement or something like that. I went back to see what it was. Behind where the com car was parked there was this other car in the middle of the street. And just as I was coming onto this, Little Bear was coming on it as well. We both, at the same time, came up to find Teatree sprawled on the pavement, in front of this other car. My only thought was that she was dead, in fact, there was no doubt in my mind that she was dead. I saw the look in her eyes and there was nothing there, her eyes were wide open, they were just wiped clean. There was not a spark. I was like, she's dead.

We both, me and Little Bear, went for the com car at the same time, and I figured that I was less hysterical than he was at that point, so he probably shouldn't be on the radio so I got him to go back and check on her. I announced my presence on the channel and waited for a response, and there was no response. Then it occurred to me, after a few seconds, that they weren't using the CB anymore, that they had the big fancy gray walkie talkies. So that was pretty tense for a few seconds, but then I figured that out.

So I got the other one and I got on the channel and I said what was happening and Bear was listening and he's like, "What? Where?" So within a few minutes there was everybody there. There was an ambulance there and before the ambulance came some of the state troopers from the bridge came over and they did that whole thing. They were actually really good about it which I am thankful for. They weren't dicks or anything.

At some point I saw that her fingers were still twitching a little and that was how I knew she was still alive. That was probably immediately after, before anybody showed up. Then the girl who was driving this car, she was just standing there clutching her face and just shrieking. Just this horrible high pitched shriek, just endlessly howling and Teatree started to regain consciousness and realized how much pain she was in, and she was howling as well. These two voices, I couldn't tell them apart they were so similar.

I think I experienced some form of nervous breakdown at that point. After everything else that had happened that week, then this on top of that, it was just about all I could take. Just a few days before, I had blacked out purely from stress. Fortunately that didn't happen this time, and I was completely lucid and conscious the whole time and I remember it all really well.

I remember sitting on the curb, being unable to sort anything out, all this sensory overload hitting me like the lights from the ambulance and all these people coming up and asking me questions and I'm like, "No, I didn't see anything, nobody saw it, nobody knows what happened. Except this lady in the car." I just kinda sat there and at some point I decided I needed to leave the camp as soon as I could and not be around anymore, and not deal with that anymore. And I didn't, of course I stayed for another two months.

But that left an imprint on me, because I've had really bad dreams about people dying. In one of them there was flashing red lights as well. I think my brain has been branded with that experience, at a really deep subconscious level. Anyway, they picked her up and brought her to the hospital. She was on a walker for while. She was doing surgery for a long time, like a year. She might still be having trouble with her leg.

Freedom

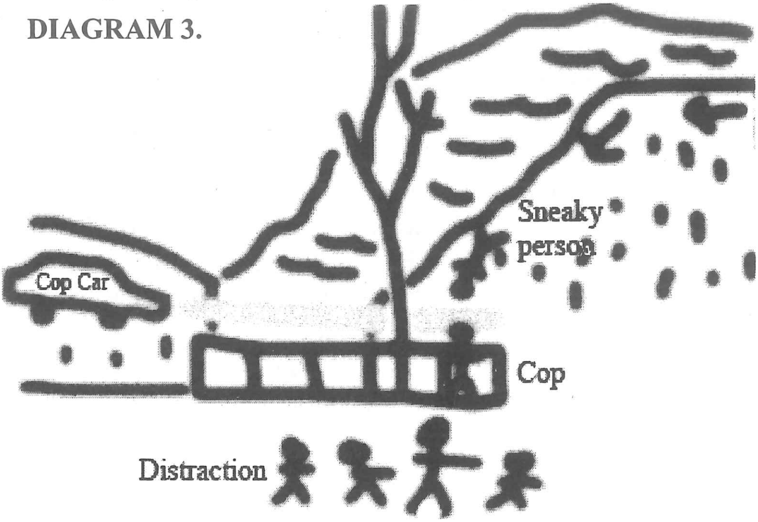
About a week after the bridge occupation, when Nettle was the only one left in the tree, I volunteered to try and deliver fresh supplies and relieve Nettle of her post. The plan was to crawl military style in full camo, wearing six pairs of pants, pockets full of radios, batteries food and water, many warm sweaters and coats, and a backpack full of the same, to the Cottonwood Tree and climb it with bark boots, boots with spikes built in for climbing trees.

We had arranged for a code word over the radio to trigger a distraction amongst the supporters under the tree so that I would have a window to sneak up in. I got about 30 feet from the tree, up to the edge of where headlights from a cop car across the creek set then stage for arrest. **[See diagram 3.]** I stopped. And thought. And waited. And thought. I could see a trooper on the bridge with his back to me. All I had to do was say the code word to cause a ruckus on the bridge. But did I need it? Could I make it without the distraction? As soon as I entered the lit area, the yell would sound, and the trooper would turn around and chase me … unless the lit area was not currently being watched, which was quite possible. Communication takes long, I could probably make it … but that light is so intimidating.

Well, I guess I just better do as we planned. "Bzzt. Can I get some … mangoes?" A ruckus indeed, yelling, walking aggressively toward the Cottonwood … the cop on the bridge turns around and stares in to the lit area. Damn! I could feel he would only get closer with time, so I ran. Damn again! I had been still so long I forgot about that extra 30 pounds I had on my legs, plus running with three inch spikes on the sides of your shoes. Run, run, at the tree, one foot on the tree and up! And on the ground with a knee on my head. Damn damn damn.

Lesson #1: Always trust your gauge of your own ability to do things.
Lesson #2: If you wear six pairs of pants to jail, they let you keep one or two of them, and you might sneak tobacco in in your back inside pocket.

DIAGRAM 3.



Marshall Lough

That was definitely one of the times when there really were a lot of community people who came out to watch. There were tons of people during the whole thing, and they weren't people I recognized. The night they brought Nettle down, there were three or four hundred people, Julia Butterfly called [from her treesit], it was one of those moments.

Nettle

A Journal Entry

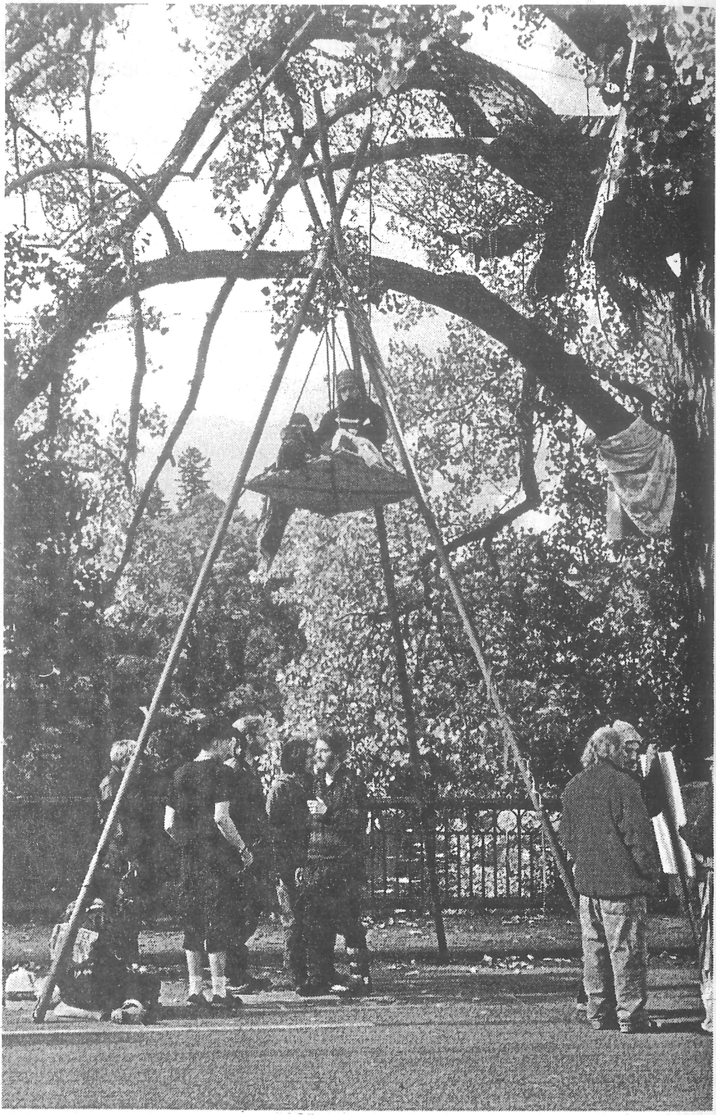
I recall Indigenous People's Day, 1999, celebrated by some as Columbus Day. Sitting beneath the Four Sacred Oaks her near the birthplace of the Dakota in Minnehaha Park. Tying prayer ties with tobacco in cloth, as requested by Darlene, a sweet elder who teaches us the importance of spirituality and unconditional love. The waterfall which normally flows fast and free is just a trickle, due to it's diversion for the road project. If it goes through, which is well underway, these trees, this ceremonial/burial site and Coldwater Spring, the last clean spring in the city, will be destroyed for a two minute faster highway trip.

Today I am feeling distraught and a bit hopeless, yet knowing that later at the feast I will taste the wild rice harvested by Zac, keeping the old ways alive, gives me hope. I am still recovering and integrating from being torn from the branches of the Cottonwood five days earlier, and put in that cold dehumanizing jail cell. My heart still heavy from the loss and dis-ease called progress. Now there is only a stump where only days earlier grew and endured the glorious, old Cottonwood beside Hiawatha Avenue a.k.a. Highway 55.

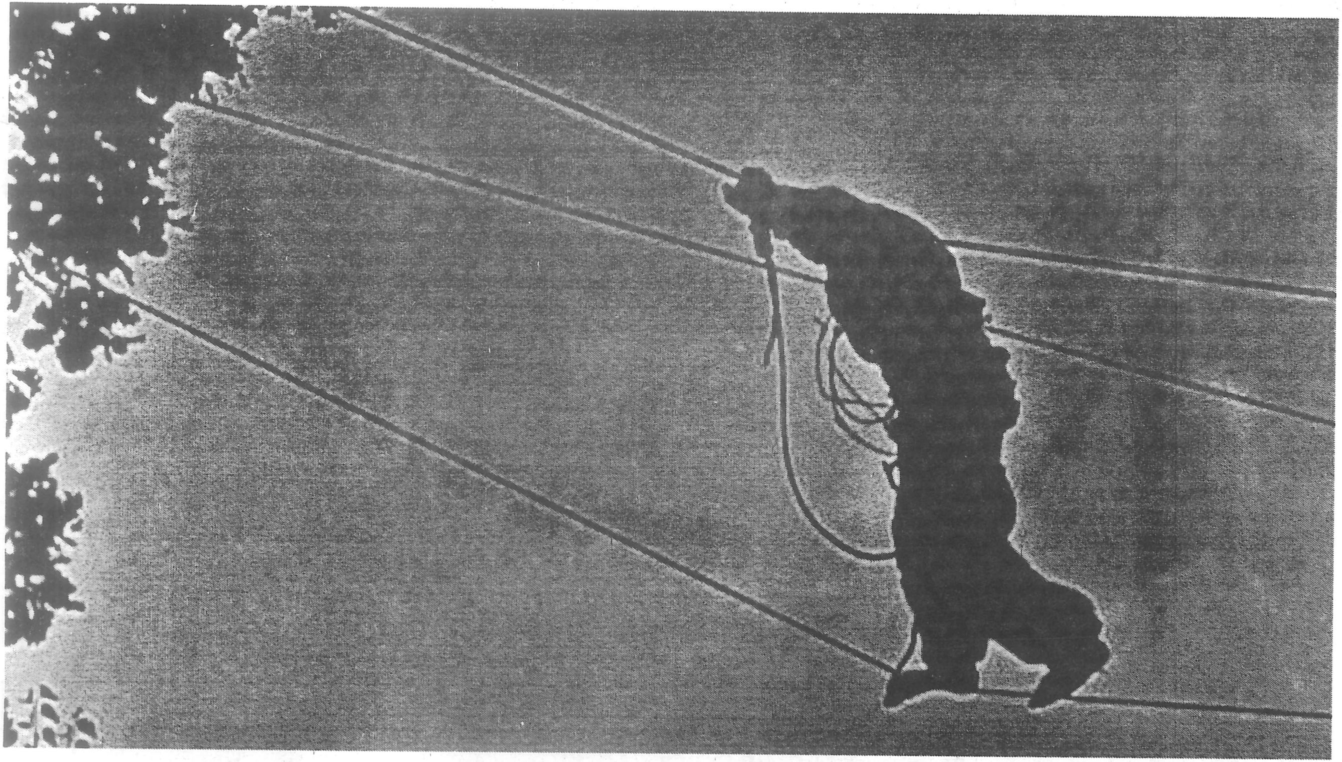
The sweat lodge two days ago really helped me to renew my strength and set me straight and was held in my honor. Everything seemed clear and our unity was radiating. However I seemed to have relapsed into a second wave of feeling I could have done more, or that I had somehow compromised by letting those men in uniforms take me into the bucket of the fire truck after having cut my web, supplies, having a knife to my lifeline, shining bright lights in my eyes, grabbing for me and making me wobbly as they said, "Trust us, we want to work with you," over and over again.

I am still grieving for the life that was taken in vain. I feel as though this must be what it is like to work for hospice and spend those last days of an elder's life close to their side. I keep imagining those heart-shaped leaves drooping down, showering her love on the supporters below, reminding me of her continuation. I say "she" because these 11 days living in the treetop I was consoled by a grandmother's voice.

Perhaps I imagined it as I was in quite an altered state from practically fasting for days and becoming like a medium between those praying, drumming and singing on the bridge and the highest point of the tree that carried our prayers beyond. She told me things like: we were like her grandchildren, all of us that were in the tree and those holding vigil on the bridge. Since her own grandchildren had been cut down around her, she was glad to have us to share her wisdom with. She said I would see her again, that it would only appear that she was gone. She said, on the day they came to cut us down, "You have done all you can do. Thank you."



The tripod on the bridge next to the Cottonwood Tree. On the right in the group of people underneath the tripod stands Huck. To the far right of the photo is Susu.

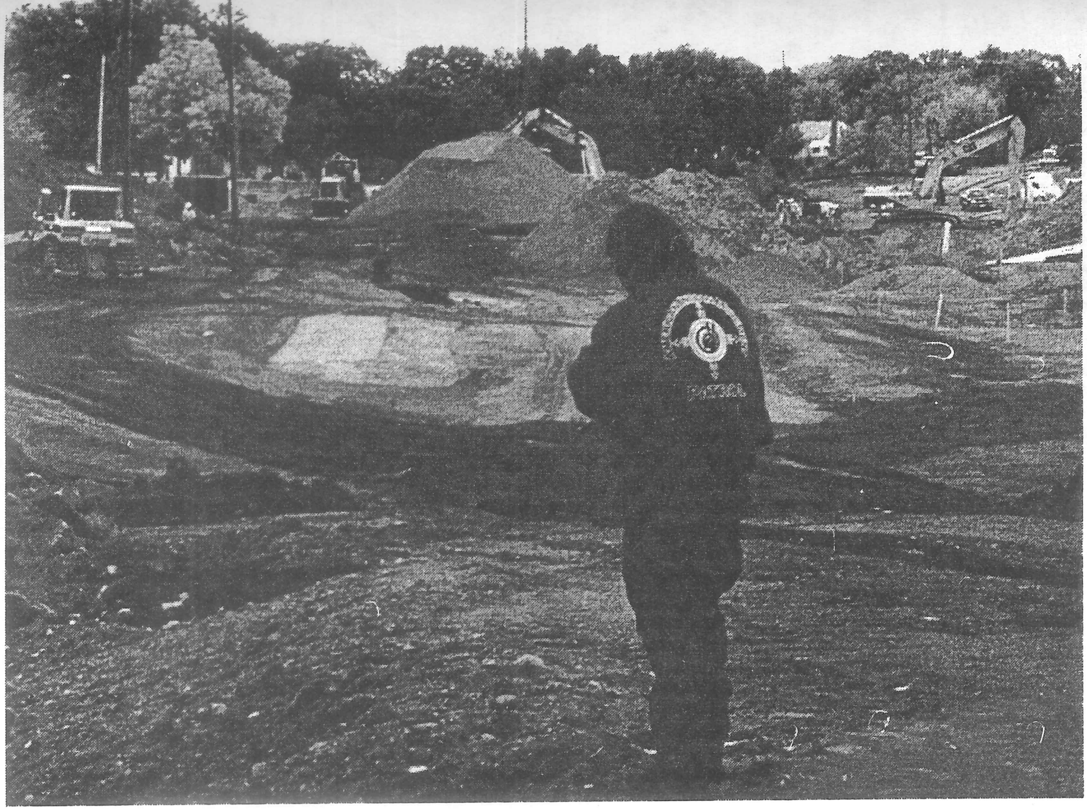


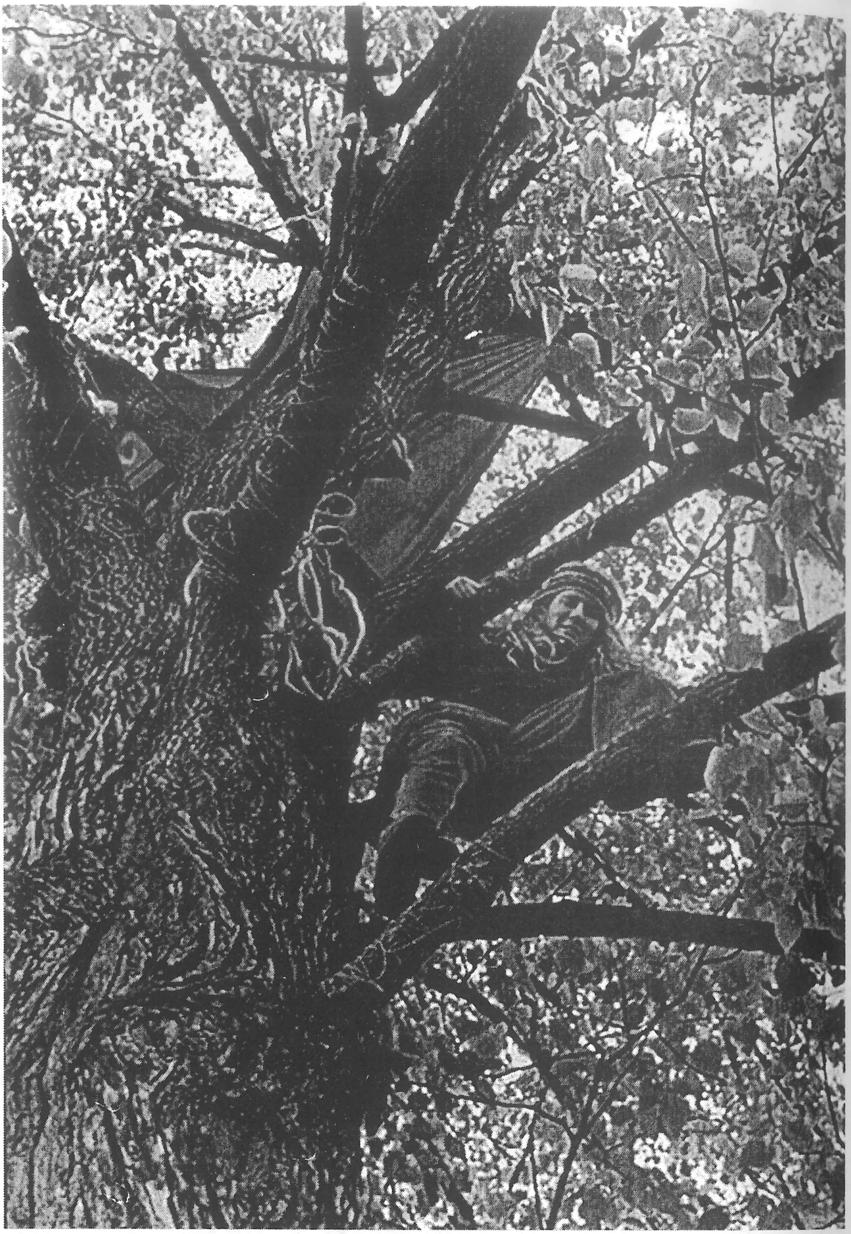
Midnight on the ropes, shortly before the rope he was standing on was cut.

After all the arrests on the first day of the Siege of the Cottonwood, the four remaining occupants of the tree regroup to assess their remaining supplies.

The Cottonwood Tree from afar, during the eleven day standoff.

Standing where the Cottonwood Tree once stood, a member of the American Indian Movement faces the destruction that extends to 46th street.





Marigold sits in a tree at the north end of the occupied area, across the street and down about a block from the Cottonwood.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

Fighting Tooth and Tree Spike

Stories From Fall, 1999

Camp was a definite stronghold. We had reclaimed land within jurisdiction of the State, effectively. We had constant roaming security, and always knew what was going on at the perimeter. The cops and MNDoT didn't come in our camp. I remember a few times during my year stay, when cops did come into camp proper. Once they got their car blockaded and other times they were followed around. Having such a stronghold is both an accomplishment and an empowering feeling, and not to be regarded lightly.

-Freedom

Falcon

March '98, I was in St. Paul, living there for work. On TV and in the newspapers! There was the Little Alfie campaign goin' on then, but also people in South Minneapolis, a lot of residents and people from Earth First! were demonstrating against the proposed reroute of Highway 55 through Minnehaha Park. All the oak trees that were gonna be sacrificed, and some of the oak trees were over 200 years old ... They mentioned Minnehaha Park! Oak trees! Earth First! Earth First!? Whoa! Radical, liberal hippies, people I love, you know!

I went down there one day, it was on a Saturday, just to that area that they talked about on the news. Walked around, saw the old train tracks, the houses, that aren't there anymore, nothing's there anymore. The trees, walking among them. I only spent just a few hours ... I found the trail head. This was March of '98, before the camp.

I knew about the camp by friends I had. I knew Zac, and I knew Bear. Keeping up to date on the internet, you know, Pioneer Planet, Startribune.com … anything related to Highway 55. Knew I had to get there, but needed a real reason to go. Like, where would I stay, and stuff like that. Worked, saved up some money.

I go to the Sundance in '99, August. Saw David Miller, who I hadn't seen in a year. He said, "What are you doing September 25th?" I didn't know what he was talking about, but I looked him straight in the eye and said, "I bet I'll be exactly where you are that day, Dave!"

Talked with Jim Anderson, Red Sky, met him the year before. Soil, Flow, so many people that I knew were living at the Free State, and I wanted to live there too. So I went. Cause Soil said, "Yeah, you can come, and you don't have to pay any rent!" I was sold.

Came down Labor Day weekend. I parked along Riverview Road, the trail head. I'm looking around, I know the camp's around here somewhere. I remembered where the houses used to be, they were all gone. Then all of a sudden I saw a barricade with logs and sticks and stuff. Right away I knew exactly what that was, what it meant, from experience. I followed the path behind it, I look up, see a couple things hanging from trees, I see a treesit. I'm like, "Ah-ha." I pop out the camera, take some pictures. I am in the right place.

I follow the trail, through the woods. I'm thinking, "Man, I am in Minneapolis, and I'm in the middle of a forest. This is cool! They better not mess with this." It was like walking through a jungle. It was great. But I didn't see any people! That was OK. Then all of a sudden, go through a clearing, see sumac, and see this triangle thing, sticking up through the trees. Ah ha! That's the Star Lodge! Ah ha ha ha! I was totally laughing the first time I saw the Star Lodge. The way it was described, I didn't quite picture it being that way. But I thought, "I bet it works, cause if it didn't, they wouldn't have built it. People are living in that thing. Maybe I'll be living in that thing too!" And I did.

Hung out on the bus a little later. Kinda learned the ways of the CB and security culture. Things with feathers, things with fur! Things with fur was the south, things with feathers was the North. So it'd be like, big bird to cookie monster. Codes. Radio handles. We'd have our own special names, but on the radio we'd interchange names. It would mess up anyone who was listening. We'd change channels, and they couldn't track us.

So that was the first day at camp! It turned out to be a long day. I wound up sleeping in my truck. I slept there for a few days, until I was invited to stay in the Star Lodge, because there was actually room. Open pod. "I'll take it!" I did. Stayed there all the way until the end, in December. Morning circles were good. They weren't always in the morning! Sometimes they'd be at two o' clock in the afternoon! We'd try and have them every morning, or at least a couple times a week. Get people together.

Weekends were good because there wasn't any work going on, construction work, no clearcutting. People, regular folks who cared, but didn't have time because of their jobs, didn't have to work on the weekends, so more people would come out on the weekends. So there was more to do, more entertainment. Utah Phillips came out, talked about hobo camps, said this was the best hobo camp he had ever been to. That was a good night.

A lot of birthdays at the Free State. My birthday fell on a Thursday, October 5th, 1999. That day, I'd say late morning, reports are coming in that there's action, North side. They're cutting trees in the park. They were literally coming down. We were just trying to keep everything together. I'm geared up to go up a tree if necessary.

I'm thinking, "It's my birthday and we're at war." The hydro-ax was going full blast that day. South of the depot, where that ash was. They did some on Riverview, some tree-cutting. The tree that had the Freedom sit in it, that big willow, that was cut down. I mean, people were in trees, but not enough people were in trees, at the time. It was intense.

Arm yourself with radio, arm yourself with cameras. That's definitely what I did; loaded film in my camera and got pictures of the aftermath, right after. We were able to stop [some of it]- it could've been worse.

Madeline Gardner

So, later, that fall, I'd gotten to be really close friends with Tree, and was hanging out with Solstice a bit too. It was gettin' pretty cold, so Tree and Solstice and I decided we should all sleep in a bed together to stay warm. Sols and I wanted to get out of the Star Lodge cause it was getting pretty crusty. So we moved into the tipi with Tree, and slept on a single mattress. Bear and Zac slept in there too, and the three of us. There was nothing going on between us, we just liked each other and wanted to stay warm. So we would sleep in there, and there would be about two feet high of blankets, cause it was so cold! When you'd go to bed at night, you'd feel the weight of them, crushing your body, but you were so grateful for it cause it meant that you would be warm. We'd often sleep like sardines, all on our sides, and whenever I slept in the middle I'd wake up sweating, but if you slept on the side, you were just right. So we had to rotate. The first night we did it, I didn't sleep cause it was so uncomfortable, but after the first night, it was the best bed there was.

There was a big firepit in the middle of the tipi. On cold nights Bear always wanted a fire, but we never wanted it, cause on quite a few nights we'd wake up and there would be so much smoke in the tipi, that you couldn't breath, or see across to the other side of the tipi! Bear would say "Shit!" and throw logs on the fire, and we'd run outside and adjust the flaps. Bear always insisted we have a fire. I loved living in the tipi, I did my homework in there a lot. It was a quiet place where I could concentrate. I remember feeling, 'I'm the luckiest person in the world! I live in a tipi and do my homework by candlelight! There's nothing better than this!'

At that time, I would wake up at four, and do the four to six security shift, which I loved. I loved doing security. Often, I didn't want to get out of bed, especially when it's cold, but when I was out of bed I was always really happy about it. Almost every day I would make instant oatmeal, just 'cause I was too lazy to cook, and eat that and do security for two hours and then ride my bike to school at sixish.

I got a lot of strange looks that last semester at school and I didn't have a lot of friends anymore. It was partly me, but partly them too, because my life was largely out of the range of other people's experiences. I don't think people could relate very well. I know I also smelled really strong all the time and my sweaters always smelled kind of moldy and like wood smoke too. And you know, it's high school. But I didn't care at all. I had my own family and my life was so fulfilling and incredible that I wasn't wanting for anything.

School was kind of like this blank space I went to every day and turned off my brain and went through the motions. I got all A's that semester too, which I've never gotten before! And then my brain would turn back on as soon as I left.

The one good thing I think came out of the fact I was in high school was that I organized for a panel of speakers to come from the Free State and to speak in the auditorium. I went around after school and talked to all these different teachers and was like "I'm organizing this thing, can you bring your class down." And it was set up in a way that the speakers would be there all day long and different classrooms could sign up and come down to the auditorium. I got one of my professors, my philosophy teacher who was such a cool lady, she had me speak in her class. She sponsored it for me, I did all the work and got the approvals. Then Bob

Brown and Marshall and Emily Lindell were the ones who came and spoke. We did it all day long every hour and like 300 kids came every hour! I remember hearing in the halls kids saying "Oh yeah, I went this morning and I'm going to ditch my next hour and go again!" I thought, 'This is so cool!' And I was so nervous about it that no one was going to come and it was going to be terrible! They would speak; I would introduce them and the three of them would each give a little presentation; the auditorium would be silent, and that just doesn't happen at Central! It doesn't happen! And the last 20 minutes they would take questions; people could write a question down on a little slip of paper and we'd collect them and pass them up. And every hour there would be 50, 60, 70 questions! We couldn't get through them all! I was thrilled!

It was such a success; in hindsight, I made the mistake of not doing good follow-up afterwards ... The opportunity was there to encourage teachers to take their students on field trips. Or I could have made myself more accessible, said, "I'll take you down there," to kids who showed interest. But I had such a hard time being at school that whenever I was there, my only thought was, "Oh, I want to leave," instead of seeing it as an opportunity to do outreach to a lot of kids. I regret that I didn't take advantage of that more.

I remember that fall, living in the tipi and going to school and being at the Free State all the time, as being the happiest time of my entire life, up until then and since too, of feeling so fulfilled all the time. Also I started feeling, come December, this intense panic in my heart, of, "Oh my God it's gonna end. It's gonna end." Realizing that was so hard for me.

Tree

The land we lived together upon had the ghosts and memories of a village where people placed their homes and had their ceremonies. Families came together and embraced their new babies and let go of their dead. Bonds were created, and bonds were broken. Footprints were left deep beneath the wood chips where we walked, and those who were drawn to the Land and the People of the Free State felt the draw of village life as we prayed together, worked and cooked together, told stories, laughed and argued around the fires.

We loved each other as friends, as family, as lovers. The twists and turns of the braids that Free State relationships created pulled us together in those deep, intense, sorrowful, and frightening times, giving us joy and drama fit for a family of passionate souls wedded by a passionate cause.

This is a song I wrote in a hammock atop one of the golden Maple Trees ...

You come to me in the darkness and chase away shadows as I sleep.
In the dark, in the night, you hold me, and bring light.
As the morning comes round the trees, our family, start falling down.
I let go of you, reach my arms to what I can't do.
There's a severance so complete that in this lifetime my hands just can't heal.
But I can feel, I can feel
Their deaths on the ground
And the blindness, the deafness of those around
And the bitterness of these sins
And the beauty as the day begins.
In this path we go there's so little room for our own sorrows.
There's so much to hope for we have to give away our own dreams.
So many dying and so many crying and we've been chosen ...
To watch, to fight, to walk for those who can't
And to pray for the day for things to come round right.
  And somewhere in the dark
  There's a place where I can touch your heart
  Let you into my eyes
  Tell your spirit to arise
  Walk with you through the leaves
  In a moment of peace
  Oh Lover, just for a while.
I'm not afraid to die
I'm not afraid to cry
I'm not afraid to see the falling of these trees
I'm not afraid of the pain that's in your eyes

Not afraid of good-byes
Oh Lover, sometimes I'm so afraid.
But I'll walk alone through the morning light
Place my hands in the fire and pray for the strength to fight
And I'll break my heart to bring the world to life.
And I'll lay my smile across the wounds
I'll stand with the trees, learn my lessons from the breeze
Oh and heal, if only, for just a while.
Yes there's a place in your arms where we don't have to be strong.
I'll let me if you let you, let you.
Because somewhere in the dark
There's a place to bring light into our hearts.
Where we open our eyes, allow our spirits to arise.
Walk our pathways in peace, strong focused and Free
Oh, Lover, just, for a while.

The North/South 55 March

Lynn Levine

There was a gathering of people under a tree. It was July of 1999. There was a tall white guy and a short black guy whose name was Steve. We had ceremony, and they stood by very respectfully, and when there was a break in the circle they came in. They said that they had so much respect for what we were doing, and they were so touched by it, and this is what was happening to them on the North Side, and they wanted to support us, and they knew that we had very little, but they hoped that we would come out and support them.

Very shortly thereafter, we decided that we wanted to do that. There were meetings over at Reverend Heron's church. Those were very disturbing, and I don't know if I want to go into it. I think those were infiltrated, because those meetings fell apart. There was great energy there for a minute. People came, there were really colors there, I mean colors!

Then they started to have big arguments about organization, and one of the suggestions was that it split into splinter groups that would report back to the whole, so we started meeting as groups of three and four and we never came back together again, and it fell apart. The people who were advocating that were on opposite sides of the room and of opposite colors, but it turned out they worked together. A lot of us were new and unskilled …

Then there was the march, and after that followed the meetings where they would have the four colors, the gospel singer, and the monk.

Marching in that march was another one of those moments where you believe. That the Native people and the Black people were marching together in solidarity, as they should be … The media coverage was distressing; [the march] was not reported on most of the news stations, and the one it was reported on said that there had been an "all-purpose march," and interviewed somebody who kind of didn't know why he was there, just wanted to see [what was going on]. They made it seem like it was just a group of people who were in the mood to take a walk. It was the hugest thing I've ever witnessed!

Marshall Lough

One of the ways that I think that change has been successfully thwarted in this country continuously is that communities have been divided over the years. One of the most intense divisions has been between Native American and African American struggles.

So we realized that they were getting ready to do on the North Side really similar things to what they were doing down at Minnehaha Park. They were demolishing a large low-income housing project called the Holman Project, which had basically been brought about through the struggles of the 60s, and which had provided really important living situations for a lot of people up there for a while. It was on Highway 55, and was part of the expansion on the North Side!

So we said, ok, we're going to start going to these meetings, at Zion Baptist Church. We started to build this concept of North/South. "What if we had this coalition that extended between these communities that brought leaders in these communities, people like Spike Moss and Curtis Herron, together with Clyde [Bellecourt] and Jim [Anderson]…" There was a lot of excitement about it. There were a lot of groups within the coalition on the North Side who were more mainstream housing rights groups, that kind of get a lot of their money from the city. They were pretty nervous about it, but there was so much energy behind it, they couldn't stop it.

So there was a series of meetings, and we started to propose the concept of a march, starting on the North Side and ending at Minnehaha Park. People were like, "Could never happen. That's like eight miles!" And we were like, "We're crazy! We're the people who have been occupying this land for however long. We can march the whole way. We'll start at the North and go at least to city hall, and at city hall we'll have a big gathering, and we'll have a thousand issues and we'll all talk about them, because it needs to happen!"

Then a really critical, important thing happened. Jim decided to come to a meeting on the North Side, and proceeded to tell the story, as a tribal historian, of why they were involved in this. When he was done, Spike Moss got up and shook his hand and said, "You know, we never really understood what was going on down there. We didn't understand the full implications, that this was a human rights issue." That was when a lot of us had to look at the way the media uses stuff. We didn't realize that the way the media was spinning it was deliberate, and because of that, the African American community didn't want anything to do with it. Spike Moss was like, "Hey, green space is great, we like it, but we're fighting for our housing right now." [We all suddenly realized how] natural the alliance really was, but how pop culture could make it seem like these kids were from Oregon.

So Spike Moss was like, "We're doing this march … and we're going to talk to the mayor, because we have inside into her in ways you don't, because we're her base." We were like, "Ooohh, city hall's gonna be shaking now!" [Mayor at the time was Sharon Sayles Belton, an African American woman.]

So people made buttons, and we started planning for this march. The march was phenomenal. There were horse riders, huge puppets. We went in the street 'cause there were too many people. We're getting close to downtown, the garbage burner's on our left, and these squads start coming. It's real obvious they're not happy, "Dee-doo, dee-doo …"

The funniest thing happened. They come zipping up, running out of their cars, and there's Reverend Curtis Herron, Jim Anderson, Pastor Roger Lynn, right at the front of this march. [The cops] said, "Ohhh.

Reverend Herron, Pastor Lynn. Let's provide you with an escort for your march." That really showed me that when you start working across these barriers, community to community, you can shake city hall. You can start to shake the foundations of the power structure. They were terrified of that coalition, didn't want to see it happen. We go to city hall, people hung a banner, they'd been arrested before … and no one got arrested. We continued to march all the way to the encampment, and have a corn feed. It was a huge get-together. Politics aside, we were all hanging out! That was significant, important, historical.

After that, something almost happened, that not many people know about, that would have really rocked the city. One of the most respected, old-time housing rights activists, a single mom, African American woman, decided that she wanted to occupy the Holman [housing project]. So she contacted a bunch of us, and we spent a whole night driving around, getting ready basically to break into the Holman and occupy it. There was this feeling that if we got an occupation going on the North Side, they were going to have to negotiate with us, have to make some serious changes.

There were a bunch of factors involved. The mainstream groups in her coalition let her know that they weren't going to have her back, and she would have had to face a lot of time, and she was responsible for a bunch of grandkids … We supported her and said, "No one's going to think any less of you if you decide not to do this." We were driving around and finally decided not to.

Then some forces in the North Side moved to try and distance [from us] a little bit, and then they came and took the houses down. At that point that coalition pretty much fell apart, which is understandable. But to this day, there's some lingering connections with people on the North Side, realizing that it's not a beginning and end sort of thing, you build your relationships slowly over time, and five years from now, when the situation is that much worse, the economy has gone to hell, all these people unemployed, and they're filling the prisons, maybe they will be trying to do some really frightening thing on the North Side … Who is it people are going to turn to? They're going to remember, and say, "Oh, wait, I think I still have Jim Anderson's phone number somewhere." And Jim will still have his same cell phone (laughs).

Billygoat

I'm Billy, Billygoat. I was at the Free State for two months. I wish I had been able to spend more time there. While I was there, I remember more than anything the community. I met more cool folks there than anywhere else ever, and that made it worth it, if nothing else. The best thing that I did there, personally, for the campaign was sitting in the tree, the one everyone called an ash. I was in and out for almost a month. There was all kinds of chaos all around, cops and people yelling, but I always felt taken care of and safe. We spent a lot of time making those trees habitable.

Another great aspect of the Free State was all the beautiful relationships that came out of it. Teatree was the first person I talked to there, and we spent almost two years together. Amazing things happened there.

I remember December 1999, the final raid, Teatree and I had just gotten back from Seattle. We were staying at friends' houses. I decided, for no reason, to cut off my hair in the middle of the night, six years worth of hair. I found out later that at that very same hour they were cutting down the tree that I had sat in. That kind of brought everything home to me. I spent so little time in that tree, but it held the same meaning to me as my hair that I carried around for six years.

When I was in that tree I got in touch with my monkey side. I learned how to really climb a tree, got really comfortable with no ropes and bare feet. I can definitely see myself in more treesits.

I also really enjoyed the mass protests. The one I remember was at the capital, 150 people, we had a party in the Capitol (see picture on next page). We were locked down that day. Making noise, taking a stand. We had a lot of demonstrations, lockdowns …

I've never been at a campaign where there's been such focus and determination between everybody. The energy level was just soaring, always on "action high." There was always something to be focused on, from security shifts to cops surrounding your tree.

Freedom

After the siege of the Cottonwood, we turned our treesitting focus to Riverview Road. We figured they wouldn't cut trees in our camp without a raid, but they would certainly cut on Riverview Road. So we started a daily treesitting crew, "Who's going up tomorrow? Let's go scout." It was odd, but we only had to sit those trees on weekdays during daylight. If we got there too late in the morning, the police would chase us in their cars and arrest us, but they would never come earlier. Really such an odd and irrational world we live in.

Anyway, we'd round up a crew, see who would go where, and go up in the morning. If someone wanted to go up a tree that had no sit in it, someone would go with them and show them how to tie their own net, and thus both knowledge and treesits grew. We were solid for some time.

At that time treesits were the only thing stopping the cutting. Eventually, one day they came and cut all the trees that didn't have people in them. I wasn't up that day, and when I went back, my huge, old, beautiful tree was dead. One time I had been in that tree, the police were there keeping guard and not letting anyone near the trees. My support had come out to bring me food, but they couldn't get it to me. An elder woman didn't like that, and she took the food and came to give it to me. She got it to my rope as the police got there, grabbed her quite roughly, and took the food and her away. There were many other such standoffs there that I only vaguely remember.

Also, we didn't know which trees were doomed. Three or four of the Riverview trees that we sat in are still there, as is the tree that I sat in on the day of the final raid, which is a good thing.

Anna

My first year at Macalester, I heard about the Free State and what was going on there, because I knew some people that had been to the first camp. It was my first year in college. I didn't really know what I wanted to be doing.

Then second semester, my first year, I went to a Macalester Peace and Justice meeting. Sarah was there, and she gave us an update about what was going on at the Free State. I went down there once or twice that summer. Then I left for the summer and came back in '99. Really felt kinda lost, didn't know what I wanted to be doing, or where I wanted to focus my energy.

I went down to the Free State, and something just kinda clicked

YOU CUT IS
YOUR ARM
People
Let
the

In August 1999 eight people went into the State Capitol building in St. Paul, MN. Four were carrying u-locks and four had lockboxes. They walked in unapprehended and locked down, four around a pillar and four in the middle of the rotunda. The Capitol was shut down for the day, for the first time since 1934, when it was occupied by the local trucker's union. Natalia is sitting on the right.

in me, and I knew, my heart was telling me that I wanted to put as much energy into being at the Free State, and doing activities that supported the Free State, as possible. So I spent as much time as I could down there, and was at the last raid. That's how I got involved.

My first story is kinda short. One morning, I woke up, and the tent I was sleeping in had frost on it. I walked into the kitchen, and Gutter [the camp cat] was sitting on this metal box. I went over to pet him, and he tried to get up and his paws were frozen to the box cause it was so cold, and he just slept there all night! So he kinda just shook off his paws, off the metal cabinet. It was sad.

My next story is about you [referring to editor]. I came to the Free State, and I was gonna go up in a tree the next day. You were coordinating all that. You found me, and you were like, "Do you wanna go up tonight?" And I was like, "OK ..." I was really nervous, because I was climbing up a tree, and I'm kinda scared of heights, and it was night, and I was tired.

So, we got to the tree, and I'm kind of scared of heights, and you helped me get into the tree. I would climb up, and I'd stop, and say, "I can't go any farther," and you'd say, "No, you can do it, you're almost there." You were so encouraging. I finally got up to the hammock. You asked, "Do you have enough blankets, do you have everything you need, are you fine ...?" I was like, "Yeah ..." and you were like, "Do you want to come down tonight and go back up tomorrow?" I said, "No, I think I'll stay up here tonight and maybe for the rest of my life! I don't think I really wanna come down, I'll just stay here."

I woke up really early in the morning. Austin came and asked me how I was doin', and I was like, "Great! This is fun, I slept in the tree last night!" That was the only time I ever slept in a tree. That was Soil's tree. That tree's still standing. Still there.

The Free State is the only thing in my life, up until now, that I've so clearly known, that's what I had to be doing. One of my friends was very critical. She was like, "Why do you want to be so involved?!" I couldn't tell her! I was like, "Because I have to be." That was just my answer.

Revenge of the Macalester Action

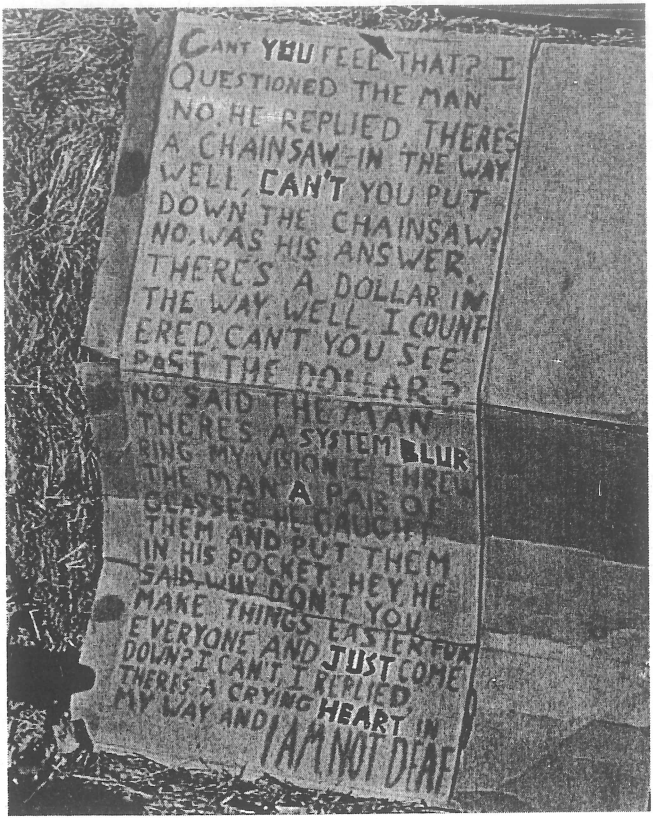
There was more than one student at Macalester opposed to the reroute, and one day, they executed an occupation of MNDoT's office in downtown St. Paul. Thirteen people were arrested for locking down, sitting down, or being support people. The following morning, one man with one chainsaw, escorted by one law enforcement officer, cut down thirteen trees on Riverview Road.

Joe Hesla

There are people who sat in trees day after day, I only did it once. But I did sit in a tree one day. It was a tree just south of the farthest south house. I remember seeing some wildlife out there, seeing a nuthatch in a tree, and a woodpecker, a rabbit running across.The workers were sort of mopping up this area, where all these trees were being cut down. So this man was driving a machine, and it was stumping, and shooting woodchips.

This guy after a few hours, I'm sure he saw where I was and he came back and was taking a stump out, he aimed it right at the tree. He was shooting these things at me, I'm sure they were going 70, 80 miles an hour. I was in the bottom crotch of the tree and I got myself right behind a large limb, so I was safe. And you know, it could have ricocheted off and hit me, I don't think I really would have gotten damaged. But it was scary, that was scary, for sure. Plus, I was angry.

I think it's obvious to say, the operator of that machine clearly wasn't thinking, wasn't seeing that we're all one people. But I think it's important to say that, because if that person was thinking more clearly he wouldn't have done that. So I like to think of that situation as, "If this person had been treated right in their life they wouldn't have acted in this way." It's important to remember that people are good; not to excuse the act, and also not to say that we're not going to interrupt something.


CANT YOU FEEL THAT? I
QUESTIONED THE MAN.
NO. HE REPLIED THERES
A CHAINSAW IN THE WAY.
WELL, CAN'T YOU PUT
DOWN THE CHAINSAW?
NO, WAS HIS ANSWER.
THERE'S A DOLLAR IN
THE WAY. WELL I COUNT
ERED. CAN'T YOU SEE
PAST THE DOLLAR?
NO SAID THE MAN
THERES A SYSTEM BLUR
RING MY VISION I THREW
THE MAN A PAIR OF
GLASSES. HE CAUGHT
THEM AND PUT THEM
IN HIS POCKET. HEY HE
SAID WHY DON'T YOU
MAKE THINGS EASIER FOR
EVERYONE AND JUST COME
DOWN? I CAN'T, I REPLIED,
THERE'S A CRYING HEART IN
MY WAY AND
I AM NOT DEAF

Owen

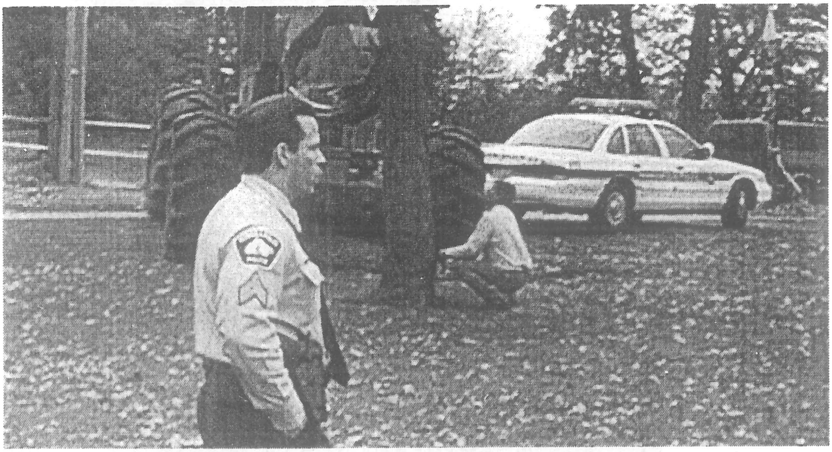
This is going to around middle October '99. There was this one time that a bunch of cops decided to up the pressure on the two sits we had in North Camp. We had two people sitting up there in two trees at that time. I believe they were Asha and Gauge. They were both up there and we ran up to see what was happening. Police had cordoned them off; there were five or six cops there, and they were demanding that we take the sits down. They were giving us a deal: if we take the sits down and clear out the trees, they wouldn't arrest the people in them. All of a sudden the guy in the one tree decides that he's a Canadian citizen and he doesn't want to get arrested. So all of a sudden he says, "I'm getting out of this tree!" and we have a serious situation on our hands. Gauge wants to hold it, but at the same time she needed to get down, she couldn't be cordoned off; she was on her time.

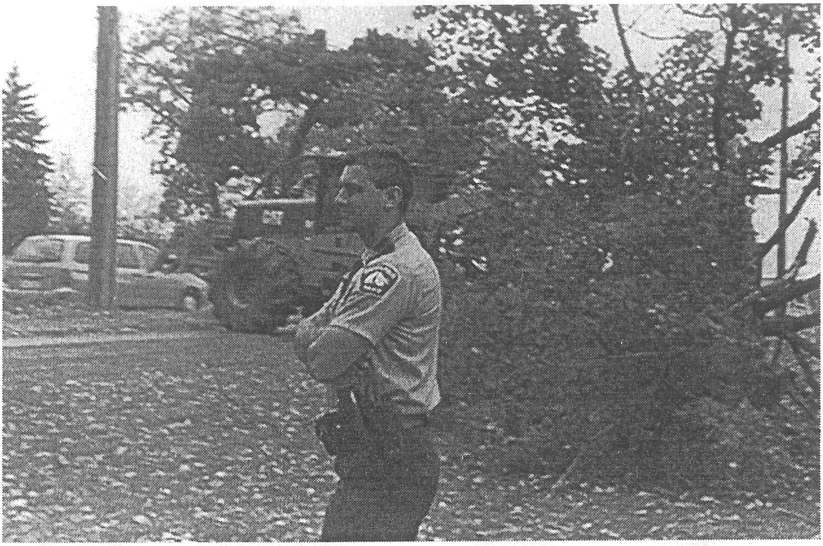
So we needed to somehow replace both of these sits, which the cops had cordoned off. There was a big circle, you know, "What are we gonna do?" There were a lot of different opinions going around. Greg was on a very conservative stand that day. He said, "Let's just give him the sits, we can't pull this off; pull the people out of the trees," Thankfully, there was another side of the group, that was Solstice and some other people. I remember Squash was one of them because that was the day of the "Cop praying to Squash" picture. So Squash was negotiating with them. They think he's the leader. That was one theory, was that Squash was the king of the revolution. Somehow a plan came together.

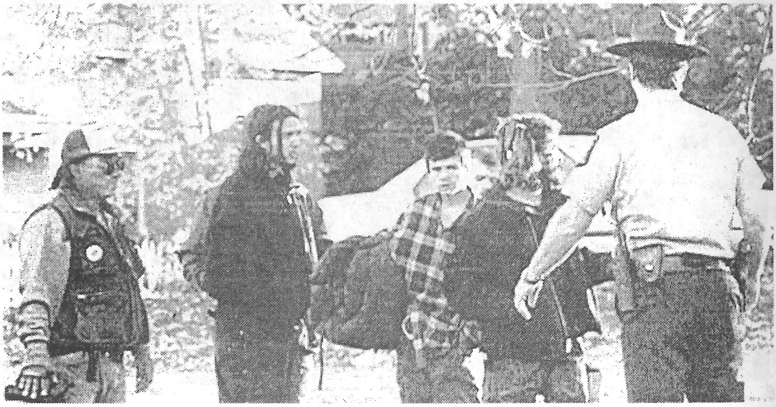
Squash distracted the cops with some kind of negotiation while a couple people bolted up the trees. One was Weasel, and the other was a kid named Shoe, who was travelling through. Man, that kid Shoe got up that tree faster than I had ever seen anybody, it was so sharp! Asha jumped out of the tree from about 15 feet and ran into the woods at full speed with bare feet. Gauge got out of her tree too, at the same time. It was perfectly executed, they went up exactly in unison. Within a period of 15 or 30 seconds, the sits were replaced, both people had gotten away, the cops were still praying to Squash, and the trees were saved for another couple months. It was absolutely perfect.

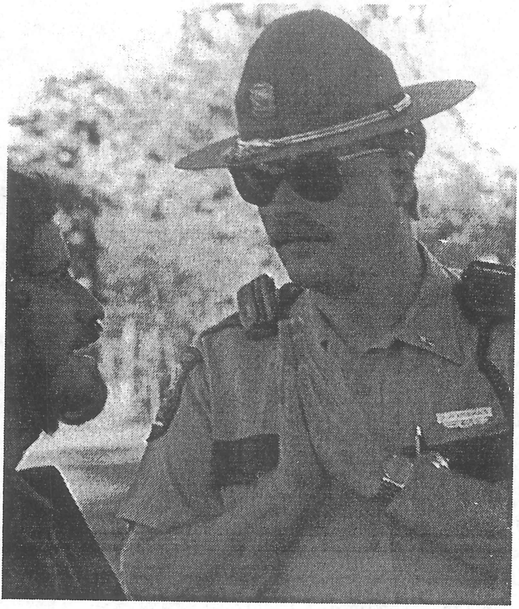
[In the picture], I believe the cop was kind of saying, "Please, we just want to work with you, we just need these trees." He had his hands up in a prayerful way in Squash's face. After the action happened, and

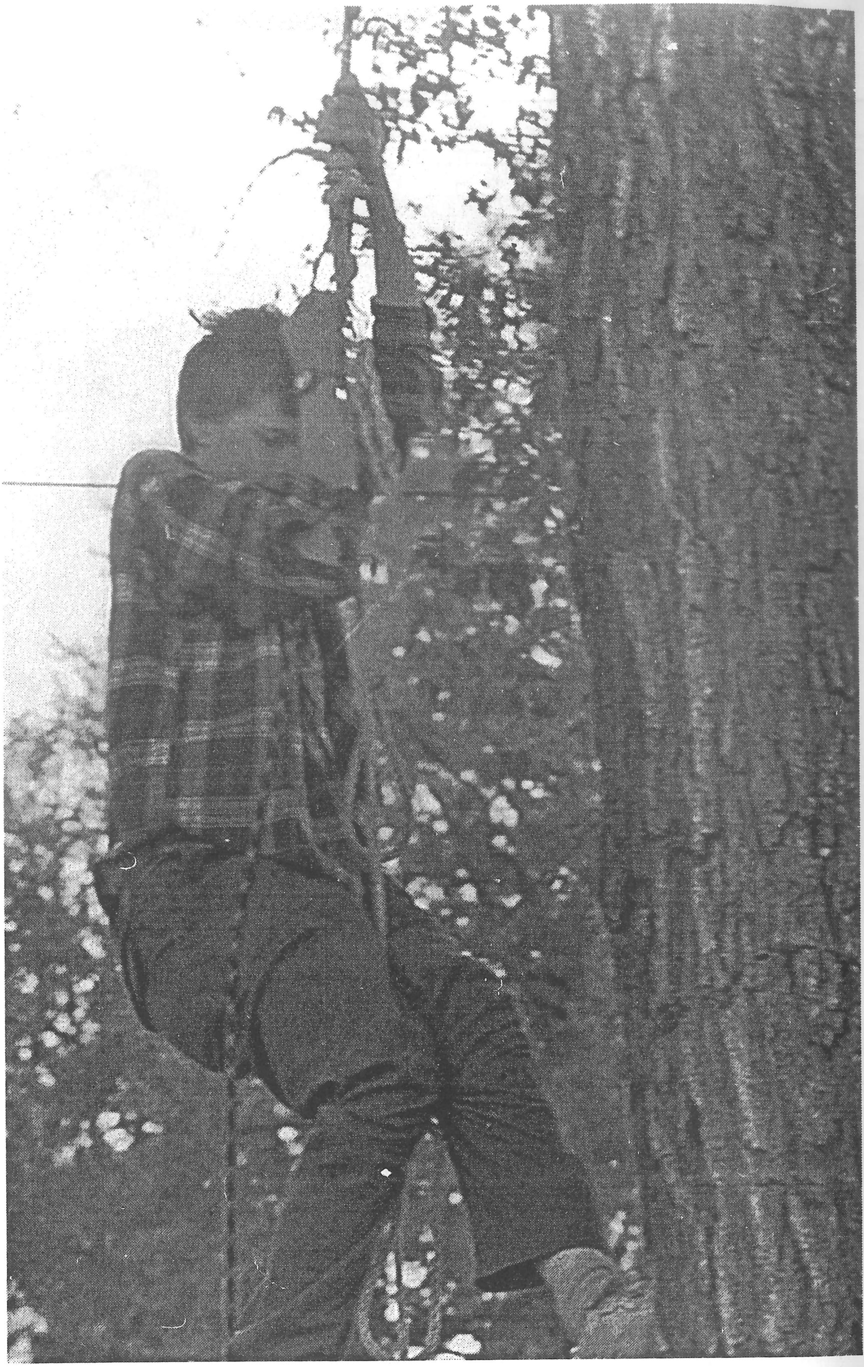
Squash has repeated this many, many times since, the cop said, "That's gonna be another brick in your bag, Squash," because they were trying to threaten him at that time.

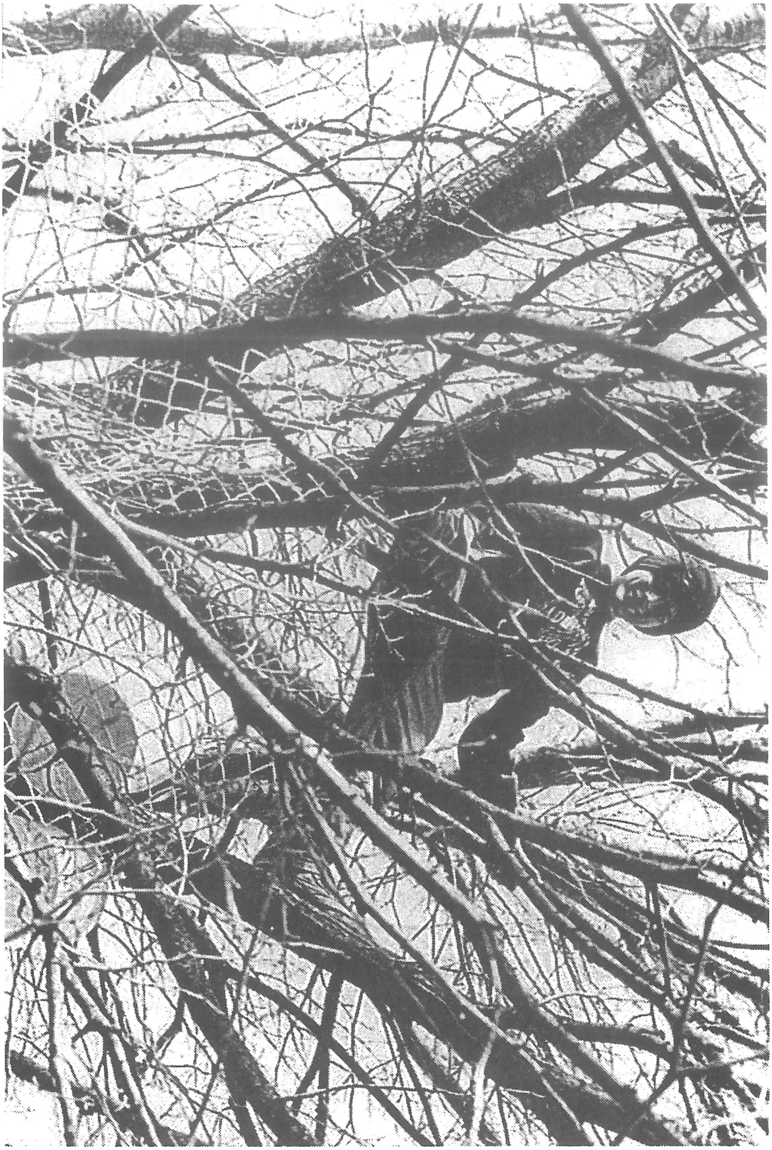












THEORY OF MOTIVATION #5

Marshall Lough

For me, a lot of my early studies had to do with the bible. If you look at what they were commanded to do, it was to go out and destroy the goddess-worshipping places of the world. They said, "Destroy the groves, go out and cut down the groves." If you look at Europe, there's a long tradition of Catholic and Protestant churches going to old Goddess sites and smacking their new structures right on top of them. That was a really intense tradition within the Roman Empire and a lot of empires since then, which is that one of the ways you conquer people is that you find what's most sacred to them and then you destroy it, and break their spirit.

So when I was thinking about this whole Highway 55 thing, I kind of came at it from that vantage point. I kept thinking about it. This is where the waters meet, a site of creation, any place in North America where you have major waterways meeting is an intensely sacred spot. I looked at it from that vantage point, as far as completely dominating a culture.

So it's not like I think, at this point, that it was some grand conspiracy by MNDoT, but because of the way it was initially set up.

They put Fort Snelling smack dab on top of the highest point by the convergence of these waters, where people would have gone to have vision quests, where people would have buried their dead, and I think it was very intentional, it started out as a very deliberate act on the part of the church, and then became more of an unconscious thing. Then the paths, and the roads and rail lines that go to that central military hub, all those are going to go over things that are intensely sacred.

CHAPTER TWENTY

The Final Raid: December 11th, 1999

our children will remember this

Dick Bancroft

The third event that was significant was the final bust, which was somewhat different. In the meantime, I happened to deliver some wood to Tony Bouza, the ex-police chief of Minneapolis, and told him the story [of the first raid]. He said, "Jesus, this is bullshit …" Tony's very profane. He said, "I could've taken that place with 50 cops at high noon, and it would've cost maybe $5,000. Then Carlson gets all carried away and runs this big operation …"

The final bust was arranged by negotiations with the highway department. It was gonna take place on a certain day at 6 or 7 in the morning. I was late getting there, and they had already put the tape up. So I stood on the bank, and watched with my telephoto lens the events that unfolded. This was so civilized, the way this was conducted. I was even told that when the highway patrolmen came in, they negotiated with the leadership of the encampment, on the spot, that maybe they should wait an hour until we can have a prayer service, and at seven o' clock we will either leave or be subject to arrest. That happened; the drum came out peacefully, and those who did not want to arrested came out, and those who wanted to stay and be arrested stayed in. I could see people being carried and walking, arrested, coming up behind the drum and the others to a van.

It shows that if you make arrangements for a peaceful demonstration and you talk to the authorities about what you're doing, all of this can happen, and the purpose of the whole thing is not disturbed in any way. Those that want to get arrested don't have to get tear-gassed; they just go about in nonviolent protest, which is what it was from the beginning.

by Willow

The sound of the rustling, cracking prairie
grass on that cold December morning...
The smell of tobacco, cedar and sage from that
one last prayer...
The feeling of oak bark on my bruised, frozen
fingers...
The taste of blood, sweat and tears on my lips...
The sight of the county sheriff in his shit-brown
shirt smiling smugly from the ground...
The sound of 1000 hearts breaking in unison...
The pain that bolted through my body as each
tree came crashing down...
Watching 10 months of my life destroyed in a
single day...
As i squatted in the branches of the great
burr oak that still stands tall over the
desecrated land.

Jan Dalsin

This story is the early evening of December 10th, the eve before the day they took down the Four Sacred Trees, and the other trees people were in that day. Captain Kittredge had stopped by to let us know that the raid was imminent. We didn't know when, but it was coming, so people started to get heir personal belongings out of camp …

During that last week I stopped down a lot to spend time at the trees and pray, and visit with the people there. Coming to the prayer circle and the fire was sort of like a pilgrimage each time. It was a spot where I could be healed as well as reaching out to heal, and to be concretely present, to feel the gifts of earth that we are so much a part of, I could be there as one with them. We, and I, continued to be there with our presence with these four beings, the trees.

I had these feelings, the troopers would be up on the hill or at the entrance to the camp, and if I had ever been a mouse it would be being watched by the cat. I had this feeling, 'I know I am being observed in my every movement, and not only despite that, because of that, I will be here, and I will continue to accompany, because to do so is not only my right of praying here, it is my obligation to be witness.'

So the delightful thing that I have to share: the eve before, it was about six in the evening, dark in December, at the bonfire at the south entrance of camp, and along comes Linda Brown with some ham that had arrived that day in the mail from a woman in Germany! This famous brand of German ham had been shipped over to the Mendota people from a woman in Germany, and is being eaten by Bear and Thunder on bread without any condiments, cause that's all there is left to eat, it's cold as heck, and dark. We had this feeling of imminency, not knowing when the raid was going to be, and here they had these ham sandwiches. So the next day when the raid occurred I thought, "Thank you! You ate the ham before it got wiped out!" But more than that it was how heartwarming it is to know that somebody in Germany cares about what's going on here in the Twin Cities, that the struggle is worldwide. That simple gesture on her part was the last meal at the encampment by the people at the fire at the gate.

Michael Bayly

I went with Susu to the camp in the early hours of the morning of the second and last raid. Being there brought to mind what it must be like to be on board a sinking ship. We knew what was happening, but no one wanted to believe it, nor abandon the place of which we had become a part. We watched buildings being dismantled and the Sacred Fire being taken away. It was like watching parts of the ship slowly going under. Then finally, when the police and the state troopers arrived, those of us remaining moved to the circle of the Four Oak Trees - as you would move to the tip of the ship's stern as it lifts out of the water. At least we were together, I thought. The encampment would disappear, but the community would live on.

Bear

We did the best we could, trying to protect the Four Sacred Trees. The last day we knew they were coming in. It was really good to see so many people come in around the Sacred Trees. Kittredge let us do a ceremony there. We had close to 300 people that gave flesh offerings one day, earlier, and tied them around those trees. We explained to the troopers, told them that these trees are sacred. We had four eagle feathers, one up in each tree, we had tobacco ties around the trees, flesh offerings around the trees. When they came in, we said, "If you touch the tobacco ties, the flesh offerings, that sacred pipe, we think something bad's going to happen to you."

They came in and arrested a lot of our people. It was really hard to see them cut down the Four Sacred Trees after the fight that we had for a long time. Before they did that, they asked us if we wanted to take the flesh offerings off the trees. We called up Harry Charger, he said no, don't touch it, let them do it. If they do it, it's on their shoulders. So we said, no, we're not touching it, that's up to you. None of the other troopers would touch them, so then Kittredge said, "Well, I'll do it." He took the items, took the flesh offerings off himself. He finally picked up the pipe. So they cut the Four Sacred Trees down, and it hurt a lot of us in our hearts. You could hear people crying, you could hear the spirits crying. We knew that the spirits were watching over us all the time.

Our fight's not over. I met a lot of good friends, good people down there. We keep in touch with each other, we're still family. A lot of the people I met down there still help and participate in a lot of our ceremonies. It's really good to have them around to help and support us. Hopefully we'll all be together for a long time, support each other and help each other with whatever comes up. That's what I got to say. Mitakwiye Oyasin.

Freedom

I have heard many people compare the raid on the houses to the final raid, saying that the final one was done in a better way, in reference to the lack of violence towards the people who were occupying. While I understand this opinion, I feel something, like pulling back a curtain to reveal the full truth. There is no good way to destroy sacred land. To have the final raid be "good" in any way would have been to have the troopers say, "We will not go do this. You cannot use us to force your will on the people." I cannot weigh the violence of the first raid against the violence of the second and make any judgement of lesser or greater. They will both always be great wrongs done against the people and the land.

Suann Martinson

Written shortly after the Sacred Four Oak Trees were cut down and the encampment destroyed.

Hello, Mourning Star,

I walked where the Four Trees were, I drove by the horrible sights along Highway 55 and saw the destruction of the land, the trees, and Minnehaha Creek. I grieve for them all, the creek, the trees that are gone, (oh, the beautiful Cottonwood), the incredible sameness of the destruction. This is "development," but of what? I did not see the Four Trees fall. Only when they were gone, including the stumps, did I go to visit. And I keened in my soul for them. The trees left standing were glad to see us there. For them that meant hope. They still stood tall.

I walk by the two burr oak trees that have been saved further down the road and see the route the road might take. Here is devastation. Here is also power - the power of all the spirits that have inhabited that land. I see and hear the Native people dancing and singing, buckskin legs moving to the music, connecting with the earth in the ancient dance. This is their land from ancient times.

I see the sacred grove. I feel the power and presence of the earth's strength pull through me. "We are the walking trees, we are the spirit of the earth, we are alive and walking, and where we walk is beautiful."

I cry for the trees, the earth. But I draw strength from the land to go forward and continue the struggle. I hear the song of the earth, the winds swirl around me, the dampness penetrates my body, but with the strength of the earth I am warm and ready to move ever forward to save her.

I wear the moccasins. My legs become as tree trunks, my body a tree strong and tall and full and alive.

Mourning Star, at the first dawn they came to take my brothers and sisters. I did not stand idle, but knelt beside them, and they took me, too. Then they took them away. But they are with me always in my memory, the green of their beautiful leaves shining in the summer morning sun, a gentle breeze running though them; their rough bark on my hand as I touched them in love and for strength.

Mourning Star, thank you. By going through grief I come to greater strength, determination, and love. I see the power of the land that cannot be destroyed by man.

I see the spring, the giver of life water, flow as it has for thousands of years - long before the white man, my ancestors, came to this continent. The grace of the weeping willow on the banks of the pond and the ancient tree that stands near the spring, beauty without rival, the trees, the spring.

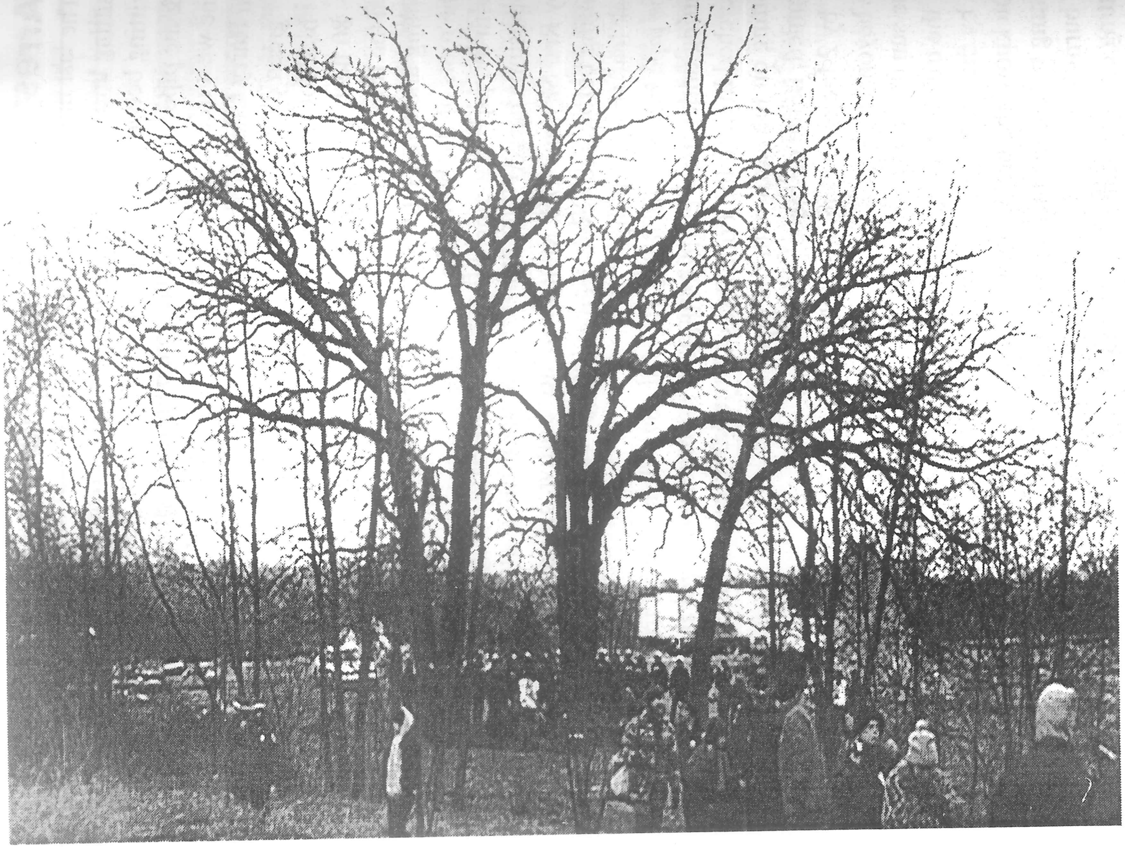
The spirit of the earth lives here, in the spring, in the trees, in this land. Water is joy. My mourning becomes song. My work is to move others to save the land, to save the spring.

Thank You, Mourning Star

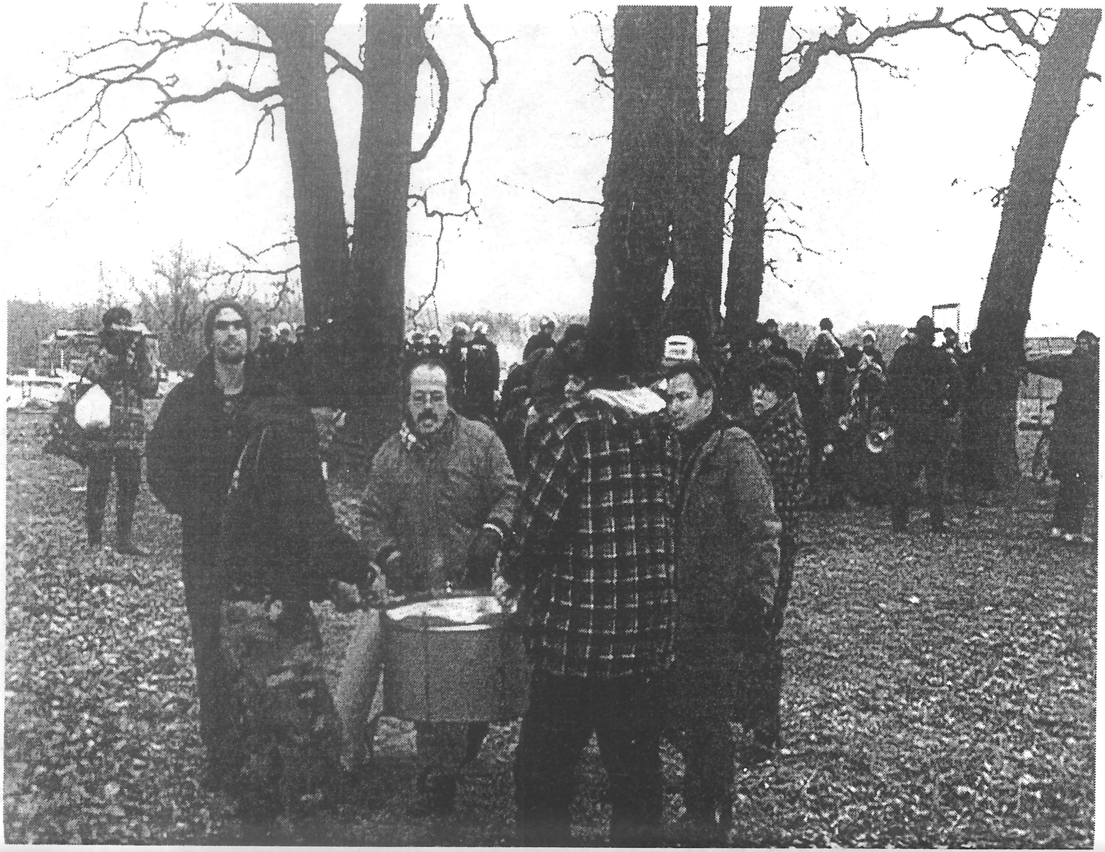
Arrested for Public Prayer

The last thing I saw
sitting under the Four Trees
sitting between the west tree
& the pipe
the west tree wrapped
in Harry Charger's vision-
   green cloth for earth
   blue for sky
   80 flesh offerings
on the four wrapped oaks
sitting anchored into
the roots of the burr oaks
with the pipe standing
pipestone carved
by Red Sky and Oak Man
sitting before the never-been-smoked
oak leaf and acorn pipe
the pipe loaded with tobacco
sitting under the 4 eagle feathers
perched high in the Four Trees
sitting on the earth with the pipe
framed, in the distance
   by 2 lodges flying dream flags
& beyond
the sun climbing
   the trunk of the great elm
   by the south gate
you know, the practice tree
sitting before the mist of morning
   burns off
sitting on treaty land
sitting blessed
with the beauty of it all
the last thing I saw
was the sunrise.

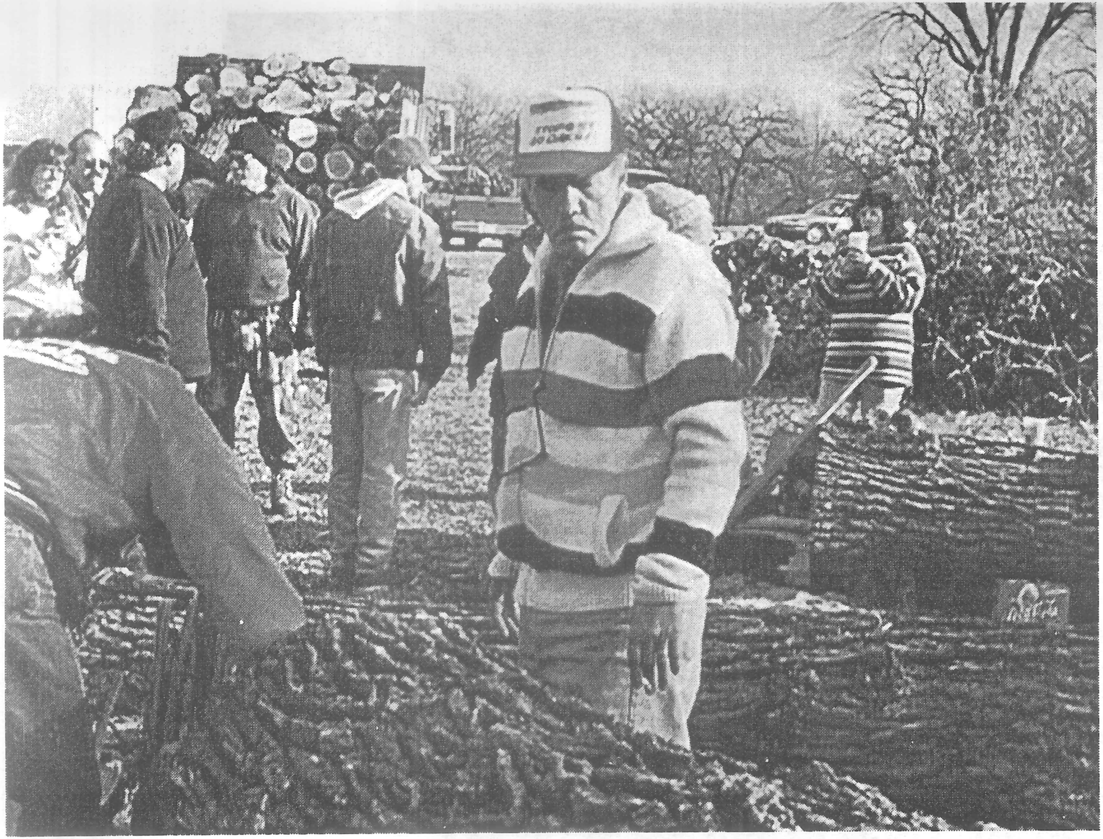
-- Susu Jeffrey
atop the Mississippi River Gorge
between Minnehaha Falls
and Coldwater Springs
December 11th, 1999



People opting to leave the Four Trees willingly on the morning of December 11th, 1999.



Left to right: Bear, Leo Ronneng, and Larry Lemieux (facing camera) escort the drum with others away from the Four Trees on the morning of December 11th, 1999.



Bob Brown stands with the fallen Four Trees on the morning of December 11th, 1999.

Those fallen sacred trees
they live like ghosts or dreams

-Water

The ancestors looked down
and, seeing us there, they smiled
and their hearts grew big.
"Look," said one,
"I bet I'm related to that one."
"Well," said another,
"That one has the eyes I used to have."
They laughed.
"It is a good time," they said.
"As long as there are people living in a
good way, there is still hope."

-Freedom

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

Afterthoughts

We had a feeling, I just can't explain
Chainsaws and dozers, we'd send on their way
Sometimes we, even believed we'd, stop that highway

Lyrics from "Beauty and Rebelion"
By Solstice

I look back now and I think, why couldn't we have stopped it? Why did the politicians think they had to have it? They wrecked the park, they really did. It's wrecked.

-Carol Kratz

This forest will grow
on the ashes of empire.
We shall dance again.

-Graffiti on Highway 55 partition,
August 2000

Jan Dalsin

Talking about what I did after the Four Trees were cut, when we lost things on so many levels: one of the things we lost was our place of gathering, and that idea bears more thinking upon. Now, when we're talking about sacred sites and holy places, it's not just philosophical, theological talk anymore. It's based on our real lived experience that we can attest to, that a gathering place is part of a spiritual life. I think the emergence of these ideas, in our time, is that people are not above the earth and all the rest of creation. We are a part of it, and it is a part of us. Realizing that as well as eating and sleeping and breathing, our very identities are tied up with this, who we are as a whole people, a whole world, a whole earth.

Individually and collectively, we were grieving over the loss of the trees, the loss of the sacred site, and the loss of our place of gathering. Spontaneously, we would meet at the site of where the trees were, sort of like going to the grave of somebody who had died. We re-membered. And we kept in touch with those who shared our same experience.

That is when I became more involved in the meetings at Gathering Grounds, and became one of the people who were doing the organizing, the "what next?". I would have preferred to be out on the land with the trees, but what was being asked of me was to be called back into my thinking and planning mind, in order to carry on the work of saving the area for future generations.

Freedom

On Destruction

It's hard for me to figure out exactly what happened to the Free State. Whenever I see a picture I always think, 'Oh yeah, I should stop by there sometime, I mean, uh …" It's not like denial, it's like some part of me can't quite grasp exactly what happened. Perhaps people who've lost their homes to earthquakes and tornadoes feel something similar. Destruction is an odd thing, usually rare in one's life.

It was also odd driving the road. I was a passenger and didn't know it was coming, then suddenly I was speeding through the place where I had lived and walked, always walked. Jolting speed overtook the peaceful rhythm … of life! A personal experience of the general trend of things over the last 200 years.

A lot of people ask me if I think we won or lost. I was inspired by a friend into the following feeling: Nobody won. Even the folks who pushed the road through, who got their way, who proved to me, to us, to the world that … they were right, or something. It's like that feeling you get when you're arguing with someone you love, and you're both really positive you're right, and then somehow you prove your side and the other person says, "Well, you were right," and all you're left with is a kind of empty feeling, because the point wasn't really that important and now you feel far away from the person that you love.

The people who pushed the road through did not get heartfelt fulfillment from it. The road did not bring them feelings of grace and good will. It did not bring them love, or any of the other things that make life worth living. It just left another empty space.

Huck

The entire period I lived at the Free State, seven months, it was completely surreal. It almost seemed like it wasn't happening, 'cause it was so, I mean you saw such beautiful things happening it made you want to cry, and you saw such horrific atrocities happening to people you loved and the land that you had built a relationship with. You never really had a chance to come down, and you rarely had a chance to stop and reflect on what was going on.

I think that's why the Sacred Fire was so important and a central part of people's lives. It was a chance for people to kind of take a step back and look at the situation they were in and consider how lucky they were ... Something you can't really convey to anyone I don't think in words.

Leo Ronneng

After they put the road in, destroyed the trees, I never felt so defeated in my life. It took me a very long time to go down that road after it was completed, and I've only been down it two times. I don't like going down it, there's too many bad memories. It certainly did bring down my opinion of justice and what was right. None of that played a part in it at all, it was all about what MNDoT wanted.

We're still trying to get access to the spring on a regular basis, as of 2001. Even though religious freedom should be a part of what everyone enjoys in America, but for some reason not Native Americans and other people who would like to go down there and worship.

Sitting outside my garage is a stump from one of these Four Trees, that has a bullet in it that was shot into it, back in the 1860s or so. The stories the elders tell about the trees in that area is that they used to get the young Native American kids to run towards the trees, and they would use them for target practice. That always stuck in my mind, 'Is this one of the bullets that missed one of the young children and stuck in the tree?'

This is part of history that Minnesota wanted to wipe out, and they've certainly done a good job of it. This land has heritage not only to Native Americans, but to the state of Minnesota itself. Once this is destroyed, you can never bring it back. You'll never bring back the Four Trees. That's the part that hurts, is that this history is gone forever. I have a hard time dealing with a lot of the stuff down there. It affected my life in a profound way.

Dick Bancroft

In essence we lost. We did what was responsible and prudent to resist. The authorities were extremely imprudent the night of [December] 20th. They bordered on an assault mentality. Then we've seen some semblance of a civil behavior, not only with the final arrests, but with the court decision on the spring. That's the victory part of this. You could almost say that the police started to behave, that nonviolence prevailed, and was maintained. Nobody from the protestors' camp did anything violent, which requires a tremendous amount of discipline. I think the discipline and unanimity of the group was quite remarkable, because it was made up of different groups of people. That should be remembered. Also the fact that the court prevailed on the spring, and that's the law to this day.

My personal feeling about the road is not the trees, which I respect obviously, but it's the routing of the road away from the existing corridor. It sort of makes a big curve. It comes in on the right of way and goes out on the right of way and for one segment it makes that loop, to save the economic interest of a few people and maybe some agitation from the veteran's hospital. They should've and could've run the corridor on the same line that Highway 55 existed on. The structures on one side, of modest value, would not have been significantly greater than the seven houses that they took and the loss of the park.

I felt that the whole issue was poorly done by the highway department and the State of Minnesota. I've fought the highway department on other issues out where I live, and those guys sit at their drafting tables and draw pictures of where roads are supposed to go, and they are immune to the impact of roads on people and the land.

The old strip of land is still there, and so what they've done is take more land for the same purpose. That's very wrong, and the fact that a bunch of trees were taken adds to the insult of our use of the land.

Craig Larson

In the end we lost huge sections of Minnehaha Park, and a big piece of oak savannah that included the Four Oaks which became such a symbol of opposition to the reroute. But we fought it every foot of the way and were able to save the flow to the spring, which might have been lost if we gave up when they tore the trees out on the north end of the reroute in Minnehaha Park.

If Minneapolis didn't fight for the park in the 1960s it would have been sliced by a bigger freeway, if we didn't fight in the 1990s, we may have lost the spring. At the close of the battle, the State did do the right thing for the spring, which they deserve credit for, even if the pathway was a little tenuous. Perhaps most importantly, I think many of our politicians or bureaucrats will never want to go through something like this again, so we may have helped protect resources that we'll never be aware of.

Jim Anderson

I went to court one morning and Kittredge was there. He came up to me and said, "Well, you got me." I said, "What are you talking about, I haven't done anything." He said, "I went to Mexico for a week and a half and I was bedridden the whole time." I said, "I didn't do anything. If anything happened it's because of what I told you was going to happen."

At the end of the second raid when they come to take the trees ... We had put prayer ties and feathers and flesh offerings in the trees. We also had a chanupa [pipe] in the center. Before they cut the trees they gathered those things up. He [Kittredge] wanted me to do it, and I said, "I'm not touching anything here until I talk to Harry Charger." Then Harry called me about 20 minutes later while I was at the circle, and he said, "Don't touch any of it. It's on them. If we take it back from them, then we're taking back everything ..."

So the feathers and the pipe and the flesh offerings and everything were confiscated by the police, and sure enough Kittredge started having bad things happen in his life. His son got his bike stolen from the garage ... I don't know all the circumstances that happened. [I had told him that] when people do things like take the pipe and the feathers [from the camp during the second raid], bad things happen to people that do bad things!

After a year Uncle Bob and Bear said we should get the pipe back, and Kittredge was more than happy to give the pipe back. So I called Harry Charger and said we all thought we should get the pipe back, because it's not an implement you do bad things with, to us it's something you do good with. When I told Harry that, he said, "That's exactly what I wanted to hear, that reasoning." Not because it's a nice pipe and we want it … it is a nice pipe and we do want it, but we wanted to make sure that people learn their lesson too, without hurting them. I think he learned quite a good lesson. When you do things like that … I wouldn't do it! That stuff scares me, I don't doubt anything anymore, because strange things happen in this world.

Klaus

I was 16 in 1998, when I started going [to camp]. I don't remember where exactly I heard about it, it was just something that was going on. [The same thing brought me there] that brought everyone there; liking the land and the space there. My father had been taking me to Minnehaha Park since I was little.

For me that whole event was really my introduction into the activist world, especially with Minneapolis and that whole community.

The sense of empowerment was one of the greatest feelings I've ever had. I wish I could feel that more often these days. Going down there and being in the Cottonwood, being above the highway, just you up there in the net with a sign, watching the cars go by. Knowing that as a single person you can affect so many people if you just go out there and do it. One thing I [started to realize] is that life is almost like a play, where you could just be an extra in it, or you could become the main character, where people know about what's going on because of things you do. You become the main player when you go and stop an entire bulldozer from going somewhere. I love that.

When I was down there at the Free State, I thought we were going to stop [the road]. I really did. It was a big motivator seeing all those people out there so committed. Since then I haven't felt like anything has been able to be accomplished. That's one of the things I've really learned in the last four years as I started getting involved with this, is it's so hard to accomplish anything. It's been really disappointing. And thinking about how that was kind of the heyday of the activist scene here in Minneapolis, everyone had something to rally around and you could know that there were lots of people that were committed to the same ideals, there was a whole community involved in it. Then ever since Mayday 2000 feeling like things have gone downhill.

Being dragged off [at the final raid], observing the officers that did it: they grabbed me and asked me if I was going to walk with them, me not responding and them dragging me off. Then halfway to the van they said, "This is gonna hurt your wrists, so you might want to stand up and walk." Once I was away from it I didn't see the point anymore, so I stood up and walked. Then they were going through and asking the officers, "Did this person cooperate with you?" They said I did, even though I hadn't. I had a "Kill your TV" patch on, and the officer was like, "Yeah, I don't have a TV." It kind of represents a lot of America. They wanted to be good people, and they were for the most part, but they valued their jobs and their personal lives over what was right. It ties back into the whole empowerment thing. They say, "Well I actually agree with you but I have to do this because it's my job." Kind of discouraging.

Marshall Lough

I had done activist politics for years, and had felt some occasional moments of deep connection, breaking through that alienation at large street demonstrations, but it was so temporary. Then the smoke would clear and you'd go home. We always had this intense potential to come together, but no actual space. Now we had houses. Once we figured out that we could move in ... It was like nowhere else I've ever lived, and I don't really ever expect to live somewhere in that way again, unless some phenomenal things happen.

This was something that shifted almost all my political analysis, because I realized that every place has its story. You can't really slap down over-arching philosophies or ideologies on top of that. You can have certain principles, but when you really start to unravel the story of a place ... It felt like we were doing that. We weren't doing what archaeology does, which is graverobbing, we were living with the living story of that place, the descendants, their bones are still in their bodies(!) ... When you start to weave the living story of a place together, intense magic can happen. A lot of it was stepping back and allowing things to happen. We realized, "This is way bigger than us. We're these little people that just decided to take a stand."

And actually listen to our elders! That actually seriously went against the grain for a lot of people. It was harsh. That was one of the worst legacies of the 60s and 70s; it was important to rebel against the establishment, but I think throwing out the concept of elders was a big mistake. So here, I think it was hard for these young eco-warriors to see someone like Carol and realize without her, without some of these people, they would have cleared us out in no time. Here we had the opportunity not only to learn from these people, who had lived these long lives and had all this wisdom, [but also] they were loved in their communities, they had the root, and because of that, people like MNDoT had to listen on some level, negotiate, figure out some way to beat us. They couldn't say we were all from Oregon.

It was very humbling, and it's also made some of us, who tried to learn some of those lessons, that much more effective. [When working with other communities], saying, "How can I help you? You know so many things from your country and I know some things, how can we work together in a way that's mutually respectful?" I still see a lot of leftist groups spinning their wheels, trying to mass organize, and treating people like blocks of clay that they're trying to mold.

More than anything, I felt, for the first time in my life, like I had family, had community. That made me understand other communities a little better. There was a love there that built over time, that's hard to describe. It allowed us to move past politics, ceasing to be, "I am this and you are that," but, "How are we interacting with each other, as neighbors?" Figuring out daily tasks, how we made decisions ... One really intense legacy was a really high level of communication. Also within the Earth First! side of things, an attempt to create a process that was inclusive.

Dee Logan

Thursday, December 28th, 2000

Mitakuye Oyasin. All my relatives.

There were once, not so long ago, human beings who

remembered. The human beings remembered their grandfathers and grandmothers and their children seven generations to come. They remembered the voices of the stones and the trees, the owl and the eagle, the river, the coyote and the timberwolf.

Those who didn't remember and who could no longer hear the voices and songs made plans for a road. It was not a path. It was not in a good way. It was a road to pave over the ancestors' bones and to pave over the sacred places. It was a straight road. It went nowhere. It was not a circle. This was the plan of those who could no longer remember.

But the human beings who sang with the old drums were told to protect the Sacred Places and the bones of the ancestors called out to them.

So they had a ceremony and built their lodges and lay their blankets on the land. The Sacred Fire was lit and the men watched it. The women brought the water from the Coldwater Springs and kept it for the ceremonies yet to come. They would protect the land. It was the time of full summer heat.

The prayer bundle was in one lodge. The women told women's stories in their lodge. Camp dogs ran played sniffed slept. People brought food blankets firewood. There were feasts. Bear built a sweat lodge. The buffalo skull was outside this lodge, with offerings of tobacco and sage. Grandfather eagle flew overhead. The prayer staff, many feathers, was placed. Prayers were offered to the four directions. All this was done in a good way. In a sacred way.

Here they stayed, those human beings who remembered, as seasons passed. Leaves fell from the oaks. Other human beings rode in on the Spirit Ride. It was a good day. Many prayers were made.

Snow weighed on Camp Two Pines, the mid-winter moon shone clear and the long nights were frosty. Still, the land was protected.

Six hundred who could not remember came before light woke the day. They came not in a good way because they could not remember. They had lost their way. They brought with them the weapons of ignorance and fear. They did not know that they were doing more harm to themselves than to the people. Lodges were bulldozed and lodges were set afire and burned. The people were taken away but could not be taken away. Camp Two Pines was changed in the early part of the day to a memory. From the hospitals or from the cars or huddled in the snow, the pain the people felt was the pain of the Trees, the burr oaks, the pine, and from the Land. Where would the bluejays meet come spring?

The ground was frozen with tears.

A human being had taken and hidden one part of the Sacred Fire. The Sacred Fire was continued. A ceremony was offered to give thanks for the work of protecting the land, the Place of the Ancestors, the Four Sacred Trees. Wakan tanka tunkashila pidamayayah pidamayayay. The people made camp by the Four Sacred Trees, the oaks, in the four directions. The Sacred Fire, in the center of the trees, took prayers up. As the winds blew from the North, the short days brought long stories to warm the people. And the Land was protected. The Four Sacred Trees were glad the People were there.

The snow and ice melted and light green shadows shone on the trees. The squirrel people began to chase around and the camp dogs enjoyed watching. During the warmest days, there were feasts and dances and celebrations and thanks-giving for the land, the water, the fire, the food and for the human beings being together. The days were long and good. Even the Thunder Beings came to visit the People. Grandfather eagle circled.

Again leaves danced to the earth and the human beings danced. The winds from the North brought stories. Soon they brought snow to cover the lodges and the ground. As the days grew short, the stories grew long.

At this time, an elder had a vision. He told the people to have a ceremony. That high in the Four Sacred Trees, were held the spirits of those who had left but had not yet had a ceremony done for them. That the Four Sacred Trees must be wrapped, first with green cloth around the large trunks, then above the green, blue for the sky. And tied with sinew. And a pipe placed in the center. And the human beings must have this ceremony, and give a flesh offering. Tie these prayer bundles to the Four Trees and place an eagle feather high in the branches of each tree in the four directions. This would be done in a good way and to remember.

And so as the people offered their prayers, the spirit people were there. Flesh was offered by the arm, and the blood of the human beings was taken by the sage, absorbed by the sacred sage as it began the healing. When the blood soaked sage was burned in the Sacred Fire, more prayers went up. The prayer bundles, bits of flesh and tobacco, were tied to each of the Four Sacred Trees. To the East South, North, West. Father Sky. Mother Earth. In the center of the circle. In a good way this was done.

Before many sunrises, during a night of great cold and a clear sky of many stars, the people knew. By the rising of the sun, The human beings circled the Four Sacred Trees. The drum took their prayers. The drum gave them strength and held them close. The People were all together with the land, the ancestors, and the seven generations to come.

Those who no longer remember came once again. The People stayed with the Land and the Sacred Trees. The People were taken away but could not be taken away.

Some say the Trees screamed.

I have not driven on that Canku Sica, that bad road.

On the back of one sign, maybe it says 50 m.p.h., I don't know. I don't read that side. On the back, someone wrote, "You are driving on sacred land."

We have ceremonies at Coldwater Springs and pass the pipe. We offer thanksgiving. Grandfather eagle watches from a tall tree. We must protect the water. It has been flowing here for over 10,000 years they say, for many generations before.

It is Taku Wakan Tipi. It is where the mysterious spirit dwells. It is Sacred. It is the water.

Tomorrow is not so long ago.

Mitakuye Oyasin.

All my relatives.

Glossary

Free State - Refers to the area of the both the first and second encampments, for the duration of both. Bordered by 52nd street on the north, Fort Snelling State Park on the east, the Bureau of Mines complex on the south, and Mailbox Road, 54th street, and Riverview Road on the west. Also referred to as the Minnehaha Free State, Camp, and the Encampment.

Lockdown - Refers to any number of situations where a person is locked in place. This tactic is considered to be a level of nonviolent civil disobedience, the lock being a way that the person may remain nonviolent and simultaneously put up a higher level of resistance than, for instance, simply refusing to move. Examples of tools used include but are not limited to chain, bike lock, and metal pipe into which an arm is inserted and bound in place by chain.

Mendota - The Native people who resided in the area of camp, and most of the area which is now the metro area. Referred to throughout the book as Mendota, Mendota Dakota, Mendota Mdewakanton Dakota Community, Dakota, and Mdote Mdewakanton Dakota Oyate. The last is in the Dakota language, pronounced (buh-doh-tay buh-day-waa-kanh-too daa-ko-taa o-yaa-tay).

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